



SAFETY ALERT

Driving in wet conditions

Name: _____

Date Read: _____

WHAT HAPPENED?

During the winter months, it's important to take into account how the wet and slippery conditions will affect farm tracks and roads. This Safety Alert covers multiple reported incidents where vehicles have lost traction on slippery slopes. These incidents highlight the risks in operating farm vehicles in changing weather conditions, without taking into account the effect of ground conditions on control of vehicles.

Incident 1: Tractor in a cultivated field lost traction, slid approximately 100m down a slope before the operator managed to regain control.

Incident 2: A Hilux operator was watching stock and drifted off a grassed track. He slid 200m, rolling at least once. The area where he was operating was designated restricted access. He was unaware of this restriction.



WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

These incidents happened on routes/paddocks where vehicles and tractors have previously operated safely in ideal ground conditions. But as conditions have changed, the areas have become more slippery and dangerous. The operators didn't fully consider how the change in ground conditions would affect traction and control of their vehicles.

These incidents may have been avoided if temporary access restrictions had been put in place, for sloping paddocks and tracks which become unsafe in wet conditions.

KEY LESSONS

1. **Take conditions into account when planning tasks.** Farmers need to plan for wet conditions, put in temporary access restrictions when conditions affect safe vehicle access, consider safer alternative routes, or put tasks off until it is safe to do them.
2. **Avoid driving across steep slopes where possible** - risk of a rollover increases as the angle of slope increases.
3. **If the tractor (or a vehicle) starts to slide forward, do not brake** or you will start to 'sledge'. You have to keep the wheels turning to keep traction
4. **Share information.** When temporary access restrictions are in place, make sure everyone on farm knows.
5. **Keep vehicles and tractors away from wet and slippery slopes.** When conditions affect traction, keep vehicles on all-weather tracks and routes, especially on, or close to, sloping ground.
6. **Experienced operators make mistakes too.** In all of these incidents, the operators were experienced in using the equipment they were operating, but they didn't adequately account for the changes to the conditions.
7. **Stop, think and then only do if it is safe to do so.**
8. **When you are driving a vehicle, driving is your only job.** If you need to watch stock, STOP, get out and look.
9. **Always wear your seatbelt.**
10. **Always carry your radio, cell phone and PLB on you** - make sure you can get help when you need it.

SAFE FARMING STARTS HERE:

farmwithoutharm.org.nz/safety-alerts

