

Shortcuts are Short-sighted! or, Invest Seconds, Save Lives¹

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Stepping over a power take-off instead of walking around a tractor might seem like a time-saving shortcut, but it exposes you to a much greater risk of injury or death.

Often, there's a "recommended safe way" of doing a task and a way that seems quicker but is more hazardous. Many people use the more dangerous shortcut to save time.

However, timed studies show that the time invested in doing a task safely is quite insignificant, especially when compared to the costs of injuries or possible death that could result from the extra hazards involved in the shortcut.

Taking a few seconds to do a task safely may seem inconvenient at the time, but Table 1 shows how little time it takes. Remember that every time you take a shortcut, you are rolling the dice for injury or death.

For some specific examples of the small amount of time it takes to be safe, see Table 2. To put these times in perspective, the total time invested for 100 repetitions of the task was calculated.

Table 1.

Time Invested	Total Time for 100 Repetitions
3 seconds	5 minutes
5 seconds	10 minutes
10 seconds	17 minutes

Remember:



Case Reports

Examples and detailed analysis of a death that resulted from an inappropriate shortcut are given in the following report:

"Farmer Dies When Entangled in Old Flight Elevator PTO Shaft." Iowa Case Report: 04IA006. Report Date: June 22, 2005. Iowa State FACE

1. This document is ABE306 (formerly AE306), one of a series of the Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published September 2001. Minor revision: August 2006. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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<
www.cdc.gov/Niosh/FACE/stateface/ia/04ia006.html
>.

For More Information

For more information about tractor safety, visit the Florida AgSafe Web site: <www.flagsafe.ufl.edu>; or the National Agricultural Safety Database (NASD): <www.cdc.gov/nasd>.

This publication is a part of the Safer Tractor Operator series. A complete list of publications in this series is given below. All are available at your county Extension office, at the EDIS Web site, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>, and at the Florida AgSafe Web site.

- Safer Tractor Operations: Introduction <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE241>
- Getting Started on the Right Foot: Dangers of Bypass Starting <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE173>
- Filling Gas Cans Safely <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE174>
- Lighting and Marking Farm Equipment for Road Travel -- Summary of ASAE Standard S279.10 <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE175>
- Road Safety for Tractors <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE176>
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS) <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE177>
- Avoid the Invisible Hazard: Know About Soil Shear Lines (ABE305) <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE178>
- Shortcuts Are Shortsighted! or Invest Seconds, Save Lives <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE179>
- Ready or Not? Get Ready with a Tractor Operator Checklist <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE180>
- Yee-Haa! Formula for a Successful Tractor Rodeo <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE181>
- Hand-me-down Hazards: Dangers of Used Equipment <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE182>
- Safety Tips for Tractor Loading and Towing <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE183>
- Safer Tractor Operations for Agricultural Employers <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE195>
- Safer Tractor Operations for Privately Owned and Operated Farms and Ranches <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE196>
- Safer Tractor Operations for Acreages and Homeowners <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE197>
- Safer Tractor Operations for Landscape Maintenance and Horticultural Industries <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE198>
- Safer Tractor Operations for Emergency and Rescue Personnel <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE199>
- Safer Tractor Operations for Farm Workers and Employees <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE200>

Quiz Answers: 1. False. 2. False. 3. a, b, and d.

Table 2.

Task	Time Invested	100 Repetitions
Walking down steps instead of jumping off combine	7 seconds	12 minutes
Walking around an auger instead of stepping over it	2 seconds	3 1/2 minutes
Engaging cylinder locks on combine when working near or under head	30 seconds	50 minutes
Getting off mower to pick up something instead of leaning over to pick it up as you drive by	20 seconds	33 minutes
Remember: The time you invest in performing a task safely is minimal when you compare it to the high financial and emotional costs associated with death, injury and disability.		