



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

### **Hardin County Extension News Release**

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## **Harvest Safety**

*Hardin County* – During the past week soybean harvest has kicked into high gear. The extended dry period has allowed farmers an uncommon opportunity to harvest non-stop. In some fields they are having trouble staying ahead of the drying beans – grain moisture dropping as low as 10%, increasing the chance of shattering before harvest.

Soybeans generally are the first crop to be harvested, but even then it depends on the planting date of the corn and soybeans. Some years, the soybeans are planted late enough that both crops are ready to harvest about the same time. Corn harvest will begin in the next seven to ten days for many fields.

Regardless which crop is harvested first, this is payday for the grain farmer. It only comes once a year, which can be difficult for the average wage-earner to understand. By the time the crop is mature, most of the expense of producing corn or soybeans has been incurred. But there is no return to labor and management until the crop is harvested, stored and sold.

Because of the harvest rush, safety will be more important than ever for the farm and non-farm population. Harvest time means farm equipment will be on our roads. Be considerate, show patience, and allow farmers space to get combines and grain hauling vehicles from field to field. It is only a short-time irritation and we need to remember that farmers contribute greatly to our economy and this is their payday.

The dry conditions this fall will also increase the chance of combine and field fires, particularly in cornfields. Even with the rush to harvest, farmers will need to be extra careful to prevent combine fires, especially since a new combine may cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000.

Extension services from Land Grant-Universities recommend the following practices to minimize the risk of combine fires: Keep the combine as clean as possible. During harvest, frequently blow dry chaff, leaves and other crop materials off the machine. Remove any materials that have wrapped around bearings, belts and other moving

parts. Be sure to check those pockets that house wires or lights and where chaff accumulates.

Keep wiring and fuses in proper working condition. Check wiring and insulation for rodent damage and replace as needed. Keep fittings greased and watch for overheated bearings. Use a ground chain attached to the combine frame to prevent static charges from igniting dry chaff and harvest residue. Let the chain drag on the ground while in the field.

Prior to fueling a hot combine, wait 15 minutes to reduce the risk of a spill volatilizing and igniting. Don't park a hot combine in the shed or shop. After a long day of harvesting, smoldering hot spots may be present in the combine. If those spots suddenly flare up, at least you won't lose the building! Keep at least one fully-charged, 10-pound ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher with an Underwriter's Laboratory approval in the combine cab.

Mount a second, larger fire extinguisher on the outside of the machine at a height easily reached from ground level. Have a plan if a fire starts. Turn off the engine; get the fire extinguisher and your phone. Get out and get help. Stay a safe distance away. Call 911 before beginning to extinguish the fire. Approach the fire with extreme caution. Small fires can flare up quickly with the addition of air (by opening doors or hatches).

Farmers will be harvesting crops for the next six weeks, but activity will be the most intense for the next two to three weeks. Be considerate on the roads. Stay alert. Avoid driving distractions. Be smart, so all of us can get home safely.

*Article written by Ed Lentz, OSU Extension – Hancock County*