

This week we had an important date on our calendar – National Farmers Day (October 12). A day to honor hardworking farmers throughout America’s history. Only 2% of us feed and sustain the rest of us!

Census data would tell you that the average age of the U.S. farmer is 58. An aging occupation that we rely so heavily on in our day to day lives. We do see a slight increase in younger male farmers coming into production agriculture and there are more women and minorities engaged in production agriculture however, many represent smaller sized beginning farms and farmers, which means they are someone who has materially and substantially participated in the operation of any farm or ranch for 10 years or less. According to the 2016 Agricultural Resource Management Survey, almost 17 percent of the approximately 2 million family farms were beginning farms.

We rely heavily on our farming community. Don’t take for granted that your food will just show up in the grocery store. First and foremost, it relies on our farm families to harvest the crop before it is even considered where it goes beyond the farmgate.

So, before you complain about the dust, the slow-moving farm equipment on our roadways and any other reason you can cuss the farmer, remember they are the main reason for many things in your day to day lives. So, THANK YOU FARM FAMILIES, keep up the good work, we appreciate you!

Our local farmers are very busy right now with harvest. Yield reports have been very favorable for both corn and soybean and that is always good news. This fall has been very dry and that has helped harvest move along quite nicely, but it also poses a fire risk in the field during harvest. Did you know Ohio is known as the 4th leading state in the nation for combine fires?

Recently, I heard a report that Clermont County has had up to four combine fires already this fall. I do not know of any this fall here in the county, but we have had our share of combine fires over the years.

The majority of combine fires start in the engine compartment. Contributing factors for heat sources include faulty wiring, over-heated bearings, leaking fuel or hydraulic oil. The dry crop residue and dust makes a ready source for rapid combustion to occur when the machine is operated in the field.

The OSU Ag Safety Team shares some tips to hopefully prevent any fires to occur moving forward this harvest season.

Keeping machinery well maintained plays a large role in preventing fires from these sources. Cleaning up spills, blowing off chaff, leaves, and other plant materials on a regular basis, proper lubrication of bearings/chains, and checking electrical connections should be part of the daily routine. Performing maintenance at night will highlight any hot spots or smoldering areas as the machine is cooling down. Removing chaff at the end of the day will reduce the amount of debris available to spark a fire.

A chain may also be mounted on the bottom of the machine to drag on the ground while in the field. This decreases the buildup of static electricity.

Have a plan in place so in the event of a fire you are prepared and call 911 or your local first responders at the first sign of a fire.

Have (2) ABC fire extinguishers mounted on the combine. A 10-pound ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher in the cab or near the ladder of the cab is quick access to protect the operator. A second extinguisher (20-pound ABC) is recommended to be mounted on the outside of combines where it is accessible from the ground. Don't forget to check that the extinguishers are fully charged at the beginning of the season.

Be safe, be prepared and thank you again for all you do.