

## “Under the Trooper’s Hat”

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North Dakota Highway Patrol

I received a question whether it is unlawful for juveniles or non-licensed drivers to operate farm machinery (tractors, combines, etc.) on roadways.

According to North Dakota Century Code 39-06-01: “An individual may not drive any motor vehicle on a highway or on a public or private area to which the public has a right of access for vehicular use in this state unless the individual has a valid license as an operator.”

In conversational terms, this means anyone operating a tractor, combine or other self-propelled farm machine on a public road MUST have a valid driver’s license in his/her possession. If an operator is solely operating the farm equipment on his/her own property and not on a public roadway, then he/she does not need to be licensed. A juvenile operating a tractor or other farm equipment under an instruction permit or a restricted license would need to adhere to all established requirements outlined in century code for that permit or license.

If a person operates a tractor on a public road without a valid operator’s license, he/she is subject to the same penalties as if operating a regular vehicle on a public road.

North Dakota State University Extension offers training for youth ages 13-15 to gain valuable experience on safely operating farm equipment. NDSU Extension will hold a Tractor Safety School May 26-28 at the North Dakota 4-H Camp near Washburn, ND. Youth will learn the rules of the road, how to read farm equipment operator manuals, and how to operate large and small tractors. Participants receive hands-on training in operating farm equipment. The training also has obstacle courses that simulate farm situations. Students who successfully complete the training earn tractor safety certification, which takes effect at age 14.

For more information regarding this youth training opportunity, please contact Rick Schmidt, NDSU Extension Agent in Oliver County and the traffic safety school’s organizer at 701-794-8748 or at [rick.schmidt@ndsu.edu](mailto:rick.schmidt@ndsu.edu).

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