

Commissioner's column

Spring is a busy time, especially for farmers as they ready fields for planting and begin setting plants or sowing seeds. It is also a time when drivers are more likely to come across farm equipment on the road as farmers and their employees go about their business.

Farming is a dangerous job and statistics back that up. According to the CDC, workers in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry experienced one of the highest fatal injury rates in 2021 at 20 deaths per 100,000 full-time workers, compared to a rate of 3.6 deaths per 100,000 workers for all U.S. industries.

And the leading cause of death were transportation accidents, which include tractor overturns and roadway crashes.

I urge drivers to be especially mindful of farmers and farm equipment on the road as they head out to their fields to work. Use patience and don't try to pass in areas where you cannot see what is coming. Doing so, puts yourself and others at risk.

As more and more people have returned to in-office work, traffic has increasingly picked up and I would think it might even be back up to pre-pandemic levels. I know it is busy when I go to Raleigh from Browns Summit and on roads around home. There are a lot more drivers, with, it seems, a lot less patience.

Farmers and their workers are doing important work to feed us. Please patient when you encounter farming equipment on the road.

I was reminded again the other day about the dangers of farming when I read about a death of a young worker involving a soybean storage silo in Mississippi.

Accidents can happen quickly, so it is important that farmers and farm workers are sure safety equipment is engaged and shortcuts are not taken when it comes to anything involving safety. I understand the temptation to bypass a safety protocol, but it's not worth the loss of life or any kind of serious life changing injury.

Please be safe out there as you plant, tend and harvest this year's crops.