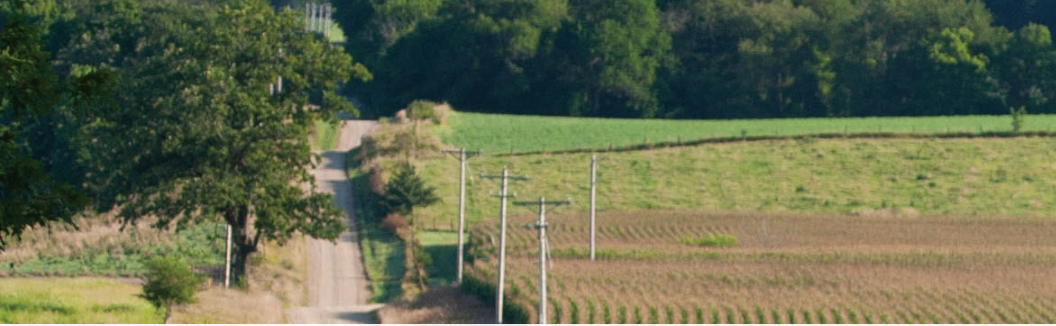




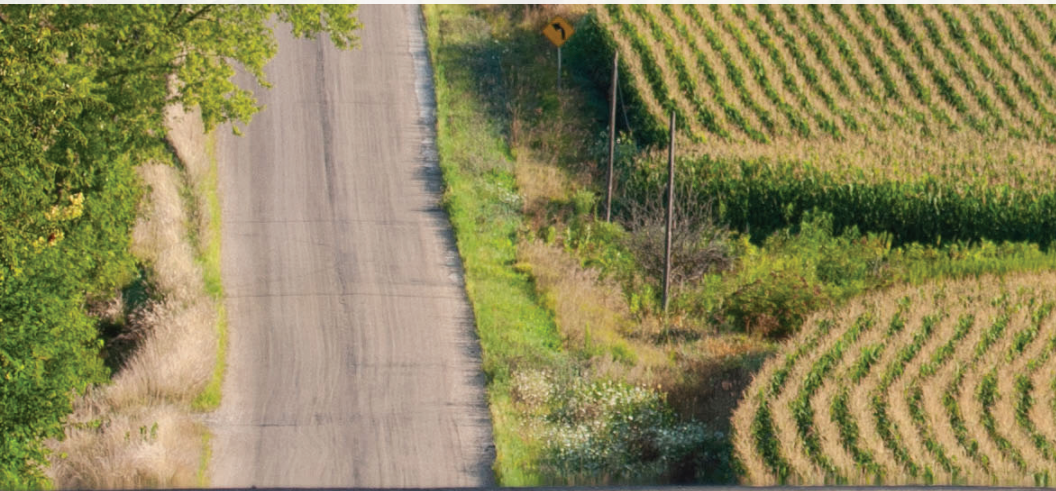
Rules *of the* Country Road





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Introduction

Rural roads offer some of the most beautiful scenery—farms, rolling hills, winding roads, farm machinery at work, fields of crops, and farm animals grazing. While rural roads may seem almost harmless, country driving is not just about enjoying the scenery. There are many hazards, and safety is rule number one.

Due to the nature of country roads, weather, and road conditions, drivers must be diligent and pay attention. Rules of the Country Road offers tips for traveling on rural roads and alerts drivers, farmers, and motorists alike, to the hazards that are unique to country roads. With a little knowledge, a good dose of common sense, and a little bit of courtesy, we can all share our rural roads safely.



Rural Road Characteristics and Conditions

Rural roads have unique characteristics and conditions. They are not maintained in the same way city streets are, so road conditions may pose additional challenges that drivers should be aware of. Driving through the countryside is an enjoyable experience, but it is important to exercise caution to ensure your safety and the safety of others.

This photo shows a variety of conditions that are typical on country roads. Can you identify all the listed road conditions in the photo?



- Poor and damaged surface
- Blind hill
(unmarked)
- No shoulders
- Narrow road
- Lack of markings
(striping)
- Blocked visibility
- Wide load

Limited Visibility



Narrow Shoulders & Unique Surfaces

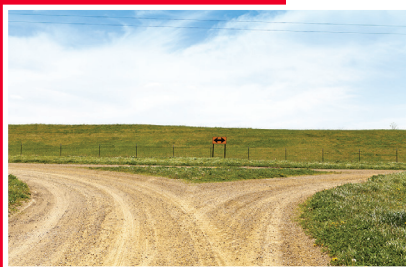
Country roads are often very narrow and may have narrow shoulders or none at all. This limited space can make it difficult to completely pull off from the road as needed. Road surfaces may also be paved, oil and chip, or gravel. When driving on loose gravel surfaces, slow down to avoid skidding or throwing gravel on other vehicles. Gravel can also cause flying dust which limits visibility and makes it more dangerous to navigate than pavement.



Unmarked Lines

In the country, roads are often unmarked, so there are no edge or center lines to guide you. These conditions can be extremely hazardous at night as there are no street lights to illuminate the road. Remember to use caution, slow down, and stay on the right side of the road.

Limited Visibility



Rural intersections can be very dangerous and should be approached with extreme caution. Country corners are often “blind” corners because when crops are tall, you can’t see what is approaching the intersection. In many cases, there are street signs, but no stop signs for either direction of the intersecting roads. Always be on the lookout for these situations, slow down, and look both ways before proceeding.



Here is another narrow, poor conditioned road with no shoulders and a narrow, unmarked bridge. During the day, these tight situations may be hidden by tall grasses, and at night they can be very dangerous in low light. Drive defensively and yield when possible to make room for other vehicles on the road.



To the left is a railroad crossing with no gates or lights, on a road with no shoulders and an unmarked curve. In these conditions, use extreme caution and look both ways before crossing railroad tracks. Make room for other vehicles on the road and be careful when pulling off into ditches. Grass depth is often deceptive and may appear shallow when it is actually deep. When exiting the vehicle near a ditch, keep in mind it may be hiding a culvert that a person could fall into.

Weather and Country Roads

Weather can create hazardous driving conditions on country roads. Slow down and take special care in fog, rain, high winds, and winter driving conditions.



Wear & Tear

Illinois weather varies greatly and changes quickly. Due to these extreme fluctuations, roads can take a beating. In the summer, the sun can soften oil and chip road surfaces, leaving them subject to damage by traffic and causing oil spatters on vehicles. In the winter, freezing and thawing can break up and even destroy rural roads.



Flooding

Another common issue on country roads is flooding. Heavy rains can overflow creeks and waterways, flooding roads and making them impassable. Be aware that in certain areas of the state irrigation can also cause wet pavement. Be on the lookout for water on the road and never attempt to drive through standing water.

Weather and Country Roads



Snow & Ice

Winter brings its own set of challenges with drifting snow and icy conditions closing roads, causing delays, and creating serious travel hazards. Since rural roads are not maintained like city streets, it could be days before roads are cleared of snow and ice so, plan ahead.



Wind

Wind can also be a problem when driving through the countryside. In addition to blowing rain or snow, high winds kick up clouds of freshly plowed dirt, debris, and dust from gravel roads, making it difficult to see the road and other vehicles. Be alert in windy conditions and adjust your driving accordingly

Rural Road Use

Illinois is home to many farming and rural communities. With smaller population sizes and larger distances between homes and businesses, the rural lifestyle is typically different than city living. The unique circumstances found in farming communities should be considered by those visiting the countryside.



In rural communities, school buses may make frequent, unexpected stops. They may also turn into unmarked lanes. Be alert when traveling near a school bus in the country.



Similarly, postal delivery services and residents may make sudden stops at mailboxes to deliver or pick up mail. Use caution when you see someone at a mailbox and be prepared to stop.



In addition to school buses and postal carriers, there are a number of other potential obstacles motorists may encounter on a rural road including bicyclists, runners, pedestrians, ATVs (all-terrain vehicles), horseback riders, motorcyclists, and snow mobiles in winter.



Drivers must also watch for deer, wildlife or livestock that might run onto the road. Collisions with animals tend to happen just after dusk and just before dawn, when visibility is low.

In all cases, be cautious, leave plenty of room, and be prepared to stop quickly. Refrain from sounding your horn to avoid startling walkers, cyclists, and horseback riders.

Agricultural Equipment

Farmers who work to produce food, fiber and fuel use a wide variety of vehicles to operate their businesses. Equipment operators must share roads with motorists and others, but it takes the effort of all parties involved to keep encounters safe.

As you approach farming equipment on the road, use extreme caution and be prepared to stop quickly. Sometimes farm equipment will take up more than one lane. These vehicles may also make big wide turns. When they are pulling off to the side of the road, don't assume they are pulling over to let you pass; they may just be preparing to turn. Watch for them to acknowledge your presence and signal their turn. Pay close attention to these turn signals, especially before passing.



A Word About Planting and Harvest

Farming is a seasonal occupation with planting in the Spring (April, May, and June) and harvest in the Fall (September, October, and November). While these dates may vary, you should expect to encounter more farm vehicles and equipment on the road during these seasons. Keep your eyes open for large, slow-moving vehicles on the road, or pulled off near the shoulder.

Slow Moving Vehicles

Learn to recognize this symbol...it alerts you that you are following a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) that typically travels less than 25 mph. Its center is a red-orange fluorescent triangle surrounded by a highly reflective red border. This SMV emblem is commonly found on farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles on rural roads. Drivers must heed its warning. When you see the SMV emblem—SLOW DOWN!

Farm tractors generally travel at top speeds from 15 to 30 mph. When approaching these slow-moving vehicles from the rear, a car traveling at normal speed will overtake the tractor quickly. This can lead to fatal collisions.

When driving the country, watch for SMV emblems and be patient. Know that the driver of the SMV will pull over to let you pass as soon as it is safe to do so. Pass only when in a legal passing zone.



The SMV emblem should only be displayed on slow-moving vehicles. Illinois law prohibits other uses such as using the SMV emblem as a lane marker or gate sign. Those who use it illegally are subject to a fine.

Courtesy

Public roads are accessible to everyone. Whether you're driving for business or pleasure, drivers of all vehicles must share the road courteously. Courtesy is an important part of defensive driving and keeps travel safe and enjoyable for all. Here are some commonsense tips to follow when sharing the roadway with others:



- Be alert to others on the road
- Be patient and pass with caution when safe to do so
- Allow others to pass when necessary (and safe)
- Never gesture rudely to another driver, pedestrian, cyclist, etc.
- Give a wide berth to walkers, bicyclists, runners, etc.
- Maintain a safe following distance
- Keep horn honking to a minimum
- Drive the speed limit
- Stay in your lane unless passing
- Use your blinker
- Put the cell phone down!



**DRIVE
SAFELY**



Summary

Illinois Farm Bureau wants everyone to be safe on rural roads. Rules of the Country Road reminds all motorists to be cautious, to look out for things that are unique to country driving, and to share the road with courtesy. It is not intended to be a complete driving manual. For information on specific driving laws and regulations, always refer to the Illinois Rules of the Road (see link below).

Resources:

Get the current Illinois *Rules of the Road* at:

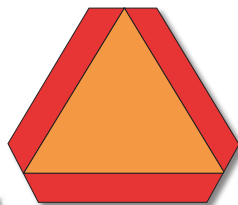
<https://bit.ly/ILRulesOfTheRoad>

Find the Illinois Farm Bureau Rules of the Country Road at:

www.ilfb.org/safetyandhealth

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**CAUTION,
SLOW DOWN,
SHARE THE ROAD!**



These words save lives.

Remember them when you see farmers
– and their equipment – on rural roads
during all seasons.



