



Safety: **Field Crossings**

(Editor's Note: William E. Hurtig is the new Safety Editor for THE SETOFF, a responsibility he agreed to at the September Board meeting. Bill will address various topics of motorcar and railroad safety in his newsletter articles, and plans also to invite contributions from agencies, companies and other arenas of expertise.)

Motorcar excursions on rail lines serving agricultural areas have one particular characteristic which poses exceptional risk: field crossings.

Operators actively perfect a cautious attitude toward road and highway grade crossings, and NARCOA certainly must encourage this. However, field crossings seem to receive much less attention. The fields, meadows, orchards, and woodlots which surround rural/agricultural rail lines may well offer a bucolic appearance, but the tractors, trucks, trailers, and other heavy equipment used for tillage or harvest are big, heavy, and often bristle with sharp edges and angles.

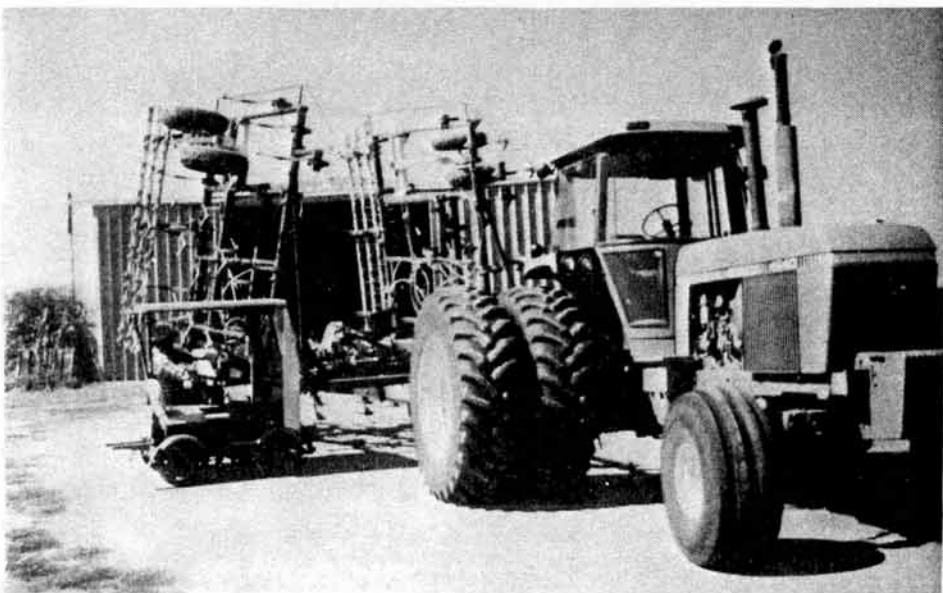
I have operated many miles on trackage with numerous field crossings obscured by trees and brush, and while grade crossings usually offer some visibility as one approaches, field crossings surrounded by bushes and trees may completely hide even a large tractor or hay truck about to cross.

A meadow or field may be entered only a few times each year for harvest or tillage, but one of those times could be the very moment your motorcar approaches the crossing.

With the cooperation of my brother, Mr. Armon Hurtig, an active farmer, we have photographed my M19 next to an average tractor and field cultivator (with the cultivator in its folded configuration, ready to transport to another field), to illustrate what might suddenly occupy the next field crossing we approach. Some tractors and equipment are smaller than those in the photo, but many are much larger, and even a small tree can hide a big tractor!

Please think about it; safety must be first, not last!

—Bill Hurtig



As you can see by these pictures, a motorcar is no match for farm machinery that may suddenly appear in a crossing.

Photos by Bill Hurtig