

4-22-2009

Take Time to Manage Spring Field Risks

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Recommended Citation

Hanna, H. Mark, "Take Time to Manage Spring Field Risks" (2009). *Integrated Crop Management News*. 703.
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews/703>

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Take Time to Manage Spring Field Risks

Abstract

Warm, dry conditions in many areas around Iowa find farmers finishing up nitrogen fertilizer application and getting a good start on row-crop planting. With a wet 2008 planting season fresh in many memories, there is probably a natural tendency to rush through field tasks. This early during the optimal planting season with a generally favorable weather forecast for the next few days, however, is not the time to be taking excessive safety risks for either farmer or crop.

Keywords

Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering

Disciplines

Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Bioresource and Agricultural Engineering

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Take Time to Manage Spring Field Risks

By Mark Hanna, Department of Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering

Warm, dry conditions in many areas around Iowa find farmers finishing up nitrogen fertilizer application and getting a good start on row-crop planting. With a wet 2008 planting season fresh in many memories, there is probably a natural tendency to rush through field tasks. This early during the optimal planting season with a generally favorable weather forecast for the next few days, however, is not the time to be taking excessive safety risks for either farmer or crop.

Take time to properly adjust field equipment for soil and field conditions. Placing the seed properly into a good seed-bed is the first step toward maximizing yield.

Make sure the planter or tillage implement is mechanically locked or blocked before getting underneath it to make an adjustment. Leather gloves help avoid abrasions from sharp surfaces, however chemical-resistant rubber gloves are needed if treated seed or pesticides are handled. Avoid fast planter speeds when you are on or ahead of schedule early in the season so that seed metering, depth control, closing, and other planter mechanisms will work their best.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be available and used depending on the task. Carrying rubber gloves, unvented goggles, and a plastic squirt bottle of water in your shirt pocket won't provide protection unless they are used properly when working around or on anhydrous ammonia equipment. Check the label for specific PPE and other precautions when applying pesticides or using treated seed. Taking time to use professional equipment and application techniques will improve prospects for both you and your crops this spring.

Mark Hanna is an extension agricultural engineer in agricultural and biosystems engineering with responsibilities in field machinery. Hanna can be reached at hmhanna@iastate.edu or by calling (515) 294-0468.

This article was published originally on 4/22/2009. The information contained within the article may or may not be up to date depending on when you are accessing the information.

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