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Take Time to Manage Spring Field Risks

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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.

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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 chemically-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.

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