

## Skits about Tractors and ROPS <sup>1</sup>

The first three skits describe what ROPS are, how much they cost, and provide information about the number of tractor overturn fatalities in Kentucky.

These last four skits recreate conversations of real farmers about their experiences with tractor overturns or their concerns about possible tractor overturns in the future.

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### **Script for “What’s a ROPS?”**

Child: Dad, what’s a ROPS?

Dad: It’s a roll bar for farm tractors.

Child: Why’s it called a ROPS?

Dad: ROPS stands for “rollover protective structure.”

Child: What’s it do?

Dad: If the tractor rolls over, it keeps the driver from being crushed.

Child: Does it hurt you if you get crushed?

Dad: Yeah, I’m afraid so.

Child: Dad, how come we don’t have a ROPS on our tractor?

Dad: Good question! Guess we should get a ROPS. You’ll be driving a tractor soon.

Announcer: Studies at the University of Kentucky found that one in nine Kentucky farmers overturn a tractor during his or her lifetime. And these are the lucky ones who survive! Some of these farmers are severely injured and others are permanently disabled. Many others are killed in tractor rollovers.

ROPS save lives and money. A serious injury from a tractor overturn can result in medical costs of more than \$200,000. Most tractors can be fitted with a ROPS and seat belt for less than \$1,000, including shipping and installation.

### Script for “What’s a ROPS cost?”

Wife: Honey, we need a ROPS on our tractor.

Husband: Oh, I don’t know -- I’m careful.

Wife: It’s good to be careful but its better to be safe! You had a close call last spring when you were bushhogging the pasture. Remember?

Husband: I know -- I didn’t see that new hole! But ROPS cost too much!

Wife: Not anymore! Now you can get a ROPS from a dealer for about \$800 for most tractors, including installation and shipping!

Husband: That’s still a lot of money.

Wife: That’s only about \$2.20 a day for a year! It’s cheap compared to your health and life. I love you and worry every time you drive the tractor. The kids and I need you alive and well.

Husband: Yeah, I know.

Wife: And you know the best part?

Husband: I have a feeling you’re going to tell me.

Wife: Right! A ROPS lasts as long as the tractor. That \$800 will protect us for a lifetime! Remember, I drive the tractor too, and so will Billy and Becky when they are older!

Announcer: Over the last 15 years it is estimated that 233 Kentucky farmers have died from tractor overturns. Many hundreds have been injured, some severely, and some permanently disabled. Costs associated with serious injuries and deaths from tractor overturns often result in loss of the farm. During a rollover, a ROPS and a fastened seat belt keep the tractor driver from being injured. Isn’t it time you got a ROPS for your tractor?

### **Script for “What killed these farmers?”**

- Sound effects: Plunk! (Turn an empty plastic or metal bucket [or waste can] upside down under one arm. Use the eraser-end of a wooden pencil to tap once on the bottom of the bucket or waste can. Tap only one time.)
- Announcer: This sound represents one Kentucky farmer’s death.
- Announcer: During the five-year period from 1994 to 1998 many Kentucky farmers died from unexpected injuries.
- Sound effects: Tap, tap, tap,... (Drum on the bottom of the bucket or waste cans 71 times using the eraser-end of the pencil for a drumstick. Tap at the rate of about two or three taps per second until you count to 71. Then stop.)
- Announcer: What killed each of these 71 farmers?  
(Pause for three seconds.)
- Announcer: Tractor overturns!  
(Pause for three seconds.)
- Announcer: How many of these tractor operators were protected by a tractor roll bar and a seat belt?  
(Pause for three seconds.)
- Announcer: None!  
(Pause for three seconds.)
- Announcer: How many of these farmers would have died if a ROPS and a seat belt had protected them?
- Sound effects: Silence (Maintain silence for 3 seconds before the announcer continues.)
- Announcer: That’s right! All would have lived!
- Announcer: Get a ROPS and seat belt on your tractor! Think of it as a one-time payment on a whole-life insurance policy for you and everyone who drives your tractor! Call your local tractor dealer today. If you care

about yourself and your loved ones, arrange to get a ROPS and seat belt installed on your tractor.

### **Script for “It won’t happen again. He’s learned his lesson!”**

- Farmer’s wife: What did you say a ROPS costs?
- Neighbor: About \$600 to \$1000, depending on the tractor.
- Farmer’s wife: Wow! That’s too much! We’ve got six tractors! We’d go broke!
- Neighbor: Didn’t you tell me that your husband rolled a tractor three years ago?
- Farmer’s wife: Yes, he did. Bob was using a small tractor to pull a wagonload of six round bales down a hill. The wagon pushed him off the road, and the tractor rolled over on its side. He was thrown off and bruised but wasn’t hurt.
- Neighbor: Bob was lucky. He could have been killed.
- Farmer’s wife: Yeah, he was lucky, but as he says, he’s had his close call and he’s learned his lesson.
- Neighbor: Do you mean he doesn’t drive tractors anymore?
- Farmer’s wife: No, he drives nearly every day. But he’s careful now and the odds are he won’t roll a tractor a second time.
- Neighbor: A study at the University of Kentucky found that 1 in 9 farmers overturns a tractor during his or her lifetime, and that one-third of these people had a second overturn. And these were just the ones who lived! Many of them were badly injured. Bob can be careful, but he can still roll a tractor. He could be struck by a car and overturned while he’s driving on the road. He could drop a wheel into a ditch or creek. He might not be so lucky next time.
- Farmer’s wife: What can we do? We don’t have \$6,000 to put into these old tractors!
- Neighbor: Well you could start by getting a ROPS and seat belt on the one or two tractors Bob uses most of the time and for the most dangerous jobs. Just think, if Bob gets hurt or killed it will cost you a lot more than \$6,000. Isn’t his life and your happiness and peace of mind worth a couple of thousand dollars? Just last year, you guys paid \$4,500 for a new ATV. You ain’t broke!

Farmer's wife: I'm not too happy about the ATV. That thing scares me. But Bob loves it. But, you're right! We could find the money for a ROPS or two. It's a matter of convincing him -- and me too I guess, -- that it's worth the money.

### **Script for "I had a close call the other day."**

Doug: I had a close call the other day.

Paul: What happened, neighbor?

Doug: I was putting out round bales in the pasture using my old tricycle tractor -- you know -- the one I put the three-point hitch on? I had my three-prong hayfork on the hitch.

Paul: So, what happened?

Doug: You know how cold and windy it's been. I thought I'd back up to that small sink in my east pasture and set the bale down in the sink, so the cattle could get down in the holler and out of the wind.

Paul: Yeah, so what happened?.

Doug: It was getting dark. A bunch of goldenrod stalks and weeds covered the slope into the sink. When I backed up, I dropped both back wheels off a ten-inch ledge at the edge of the sink. The front end of the tractor reared half way, straight up! The only thing that stopped it was the round bale hitting the ground just inside the sink. It happened in a heartbeat! When I dropped the bale, the front end of the tractor came down. Then I backed down into the sink a little, got turned, drove around the ledge, and got out.

Paul: Wow! You're lucky! If you'd dropped only one wheel, or had the bale higher, you would have flipped over backwards!

Doug: Yeah, it was a close call. It scared me. Don't tell my wife, OK?

Paul: OK, but let me ask you something. You've got two newer tractors, both with ROPS, and both with three-point hitches. Why were you using that old tricycle anyway?

Doug: Well, I hadn't used it for a while. I like to run it now and then. The big ROPS tractor was hooked to the feed grinder, and I didn't want to take the time to unhitch it. The other tractor was in the barn behind a wagon full of corn, and I couldn't get to it without moving the wagon. I thought I'd save time and trouble.

Paul: Yep! And instead, you almost got yourself killed! I won't tell your wife, or mine either. It would worry them too much. But I'll tell you

something! You ought to get rid of that old tricycle, or at least restrict it to running the hay elevator and jobs that don't have much risk of a rollover. You're too good a neighbor to lose and too good a husband and father to die early.

### **Script for "What changed your mind?"**

Eddie: Hey Al, what's with all the ROPS on your tractors?

Al: Well, I thought it was time to get 'em on. That's all.

Eddie: Hmm! Wasn't but last summer you told me they cost too much.

Al: I changed my mind. I do that sometimes, you know!

Eddie: Yeah, me too.

Al: Well, I guess Sally changed my mind...

Eddie: So, the wife told you to get with it and get those ROPS on your three tractors, huh?

Al: No, that's not how it happened. Look, I'll tell you something, but Sally doesn't want it spread around. It's too embarrassing to her.

Eddie: OK, so what happened?

Al: About a month ago, Sally was raking hay over across the road -- you know -- the place with the narrow bridge across the ditch from the road into the field. I told her to be careful. She got into the field OK and got the hay raked. When she came home she decided to leave the rake in the field and bring in the full hay wagon I'd left up there. On her way out, she was watching the wagon and dropped a tractor wheel off the bridge. It rolled plum upside down! It threw her into the ditch, just inches from where the back tractor wheel came down. She got wet and dirty but wasn't hurt.

Eddie: Well, I'll be darned! I didn't know that! Glad she's OK!

Al: We got the tractor out and back home that same day. It wasn't broke up much, just a bent fender, bent steering wheel, and dented hood. The next day I went to town and ordered ROPS for all three tractors. I couldn't stand the thought of losing her. She loves farming too much to lay off doing farm work. She's good with the tractors and

machinery too. So if she's going to drive, she's going to have a ROPS and wear the seat belt.

Eddie:                   What about you?

Al:                        Me too!



**Script for “Why did you replace that ROPS?”**

Sam: Hey Paul, is that a new ROPS on your tractor?

Paul: Yep.

Sam: What happened to the old ROPS?

Paul: I traded it in for a new one.

Sam: What on earth for?

Paul: The ROPS that came on that tractor was an upright. I couldn't use the tractor to clean out the livestock barn because the ROPS wouldn't fit through the barn doors. So I got a new fold-down ROPS.

Sam: Why didn't you just take the ROPS off the tractor?

Paul: Too risky! Too many folks around here have got themselves killed when they rolled a tractor over on top of themselves.

Sam: Your land's flat. What are you worrying about?

Paul: Yeah, it's flat, but I still got sink holes, stream banks, and I have to haul hay and equipment on the highway once or twice a week. There's a heap of ways a body can get into trouble and flip a tractor.

Sam: What did it cost you to replace the ROPS?

Paul: About \$800 including trading in the old ROPS and the shipping and installation charges for the new ROPS.

Sam: Whew! That's a lot of money!

Paul: No, not really when you think about it. I can fold the ROPS down and clean my barn. When I'm done it only takes about 15 seconds to flip the ROPS up and lock it into position. My wife and two boys drive that tractor too. They run hay wagons and silage wagons back and forth on the highway from my fields to the barn. The traffic is heavy, and people drive too fast. When they're buckled in with the ROPS on the tractor, I don't worry about them near as much. And I feel safer myself too. Besides, the \$800 for the upright ROPS saved me the cost of buying another smaller tractor that would fit in the barn.

Sam: By golly, you're right! There are lots of other things that cost \$800 not worth near as much!