# A screen shot of a computer  Description automatically generatedharvesting, transporting and storing hay

Harvesting, transporting and storing hay are common activities on farms. However, safety is often overlooked when preparing to harvest the hay meadow. The machines and implements used combined with the size, weight and shape of the bales create a range of safety hazards for employees. The key to preventing incidents is understanding the dangers involved with baling hay and following sound safety practices while working. As with any line of work that deals directly with machinery, safety begins with reading the operator’s manual and learning the safety precautions with each machine. Further, following Lockout Tagout procedures when performing maintenance or repairs on mowers, balers, etc. is critical to preventing entrapment injuries and death.

*Below are several tips for safe baling, hauling and storage of hay:*

* Begin with a pre-work inspection of equipment starting work to ensure everything is in good operating condition, making repairs or adjustments in the field increases the risk
* Perform a pre-work assessment, of the areas to be mowed, raked and baled to ensure they are as free of hazards such as debris, stump holes, large rocks, etc.
* When cutting, raking or baling maintain a reasonable speed based on the environmental conditions, such as the smoothness of the field, density of the hay being cut or specific hazards present
* Always wear the seatbelt if a tractor is equipped with a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS), even if the tractor has an enclosed cab
* When bales are ready to be ejected from the baler, ensure other workers are located at a safe distance
* Position the bale on flat terrain rather than sloped surfaces; a 1,000-pound hay bale can be quite destructive when moving at 5 to 20 mph downhill
* When moving hay bales, ensure the tractor and loader are rated for the weight to be elevated
* Ensure proper bale handling attachments are used such as a spear attachment instead of a bucket to prevent a bale from rolling back down the loader arms and crushing the operator
* Keep the front-end loader and hay bale low while traveling to ensure the center of gravity is low, preventing a turnover
* When picking up a bale on a hillside, work from the downhill side and reverse downhill with the bale speared on the frontend loader for stability
* When bales must be transported, ensure the vehicle and trailer are strong enough to pull the load, including the braking system; further, using a trailer with trailer brakes is recommended