In April 2016, a 35-year-old wheat farm laborer died when the Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) he was operating on a state highway was struck by a motor vehicle. On the day of the incident, the victim and another worker took their employer’s UTV (also known as a side-by-side) to check for flooded farm fields. The six-wheel, three-seat UTV was equipped with a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and seatbelts. Neither the victim nor the passenger were wearing seatbelts or employer provided helmets. Although the UTV was unlicensed for on-road travel, the victim drove it onto the highway to gain access to a dirt road. The highway had a posted speed limit of 55 MPH. The UTV traveled along the highway’s fog line at about 20 to 25 MPH for nearly a mile before slowing to make a left turn. The victim looked back over his shoulder to make sure that there were no approaching vehicles. The UTV was not equipped with a turn signal, though it did have a door-mounted review mirror. As he began making the turn, a pickup truck approaching from the rear attempted to pass the UTV. The truck struck the UTV’s left front corner. The impact caused the UTV to roll over and land on its passenger side, ejecting both occupants. The victim landed in the road and the passenger in a ditch. Medics arrived and took them to a hospital. The victim died of head injuries three days later; the passenger had minor injuries. The UTV manufacturer operator’s manual stated that the operator and passengers should wear a helmet and use a seatbelt. It further stated that users should not operate the UTV on public or paved roads. Investigators found that the employer had provided helmets and instructed employees to use them, told them to follow UTV manufacturer’s safety instructions, and had provided a trailer to haul the UTV to farm locations to avoid travel on public roads.

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