



McLEOD COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

Planting crops on highway Right of Way can create safety problems

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With planting season around the corner, The McLeod County Highway Department is asking landowners not to encroach on highway right of way when working the fields this spring.

Highway right of way includes driving lanes, inside and outside shoulders, ditches, the clear zone and sight corners at intersections. Utility poles and pedestals serve as good indicators of right of way limits because they are typically located at the outer edge of road right of way.

Sight corners at an intersection of two roads are especially susceptible to visual obstructions created by unlawfully planted crops, especially corn. As crops grow higher and fuller throughout the growing season, they can create a serious safety hazard for motorists. As drivers approach the junction of two roads, their ability to see other vehicles approaching the intersection may be obstructed due to crop growth. There are other detrimental conditions created by crop encroachment as well. Erosion can become a problem, especially in ditches. It can affect proper drainage, clog culverts and jeopardize the stability of the shoulders and the roadbed itself.

Utility companies are permitted to use highway right of way to install gas lines, power lines, telephone lines and fiber optic cable. Plowing and tilling can damage these lines under the ground, create a potentially dangerous situation for workers and area residents, and cause possible service interruptions.

Plowing, tilling and planting within highway right of way violates state law (M.S. 160.2715). The violation is a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$1,000 fine and/or 90 days in jail.

The Highway Department plans to monitor the right of way and notify landowners of any violation. The notice may request the responsible person to remove the planted crop and re-establish the affected area with permanent, non-crop vegetation at their own expense. If the request is not met, the complaint will be turned over to the Sheriff's Department for a potential misdemeanor ticket. The Highway Department may make any corrections necessary and assess costs to the responsible person.

If the landowner is unsure of the right of way boundary, they are encouraged to contact our office at (320) 484-4321 for assistance. The McLeod County Highway Department appreciates your cooperation in helping us maintain our highway system.

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