

DANGER IN THE FIELDS



QUWF Tractor Safety NOTICE:

The number 1 cause of farm tractor accidents and death is roll over. This includes the weekend farmer and food plot aficionados who like operating the equipment from tractors to ATV's, UTVs and even small dozers. Let this experienced operator tell you, DANGER is ever present when working close to, or alongside streams and creeks. Ground collapse happens so fast your mere human senses cannot detect the motion until it's over.

Stream undercut happens when the stream or even creek is diverted and washed away the under soil, leaving a false looking surface area ready to collapse with the application of any weight, even walking on it can collapse the structure.



Here the undercut is over three feet high and about 3 feet into the field where the access road follows the stream. The stream diversion was caused by a large Cedar tree that had toppled into the stream bed during a heavy late summer rain. Undercuts can take several years to develop or under intense rainfall, occur without warning very rapidly.

The field area was flagged for safety until dirt work can be completed or the route into the field changed. This is an extreme danger area. Note the same tree from the field and the flagging showing the extent of the undercut. The road was closer to the stream bed, now moved well away.



The collapse of the ground happens in a split second, too fast for operators to react and can cause severe injury and death. In many cases the equipment lands upside down leaving little chance for the operator.

The next picture shows a very lucky operator. They were putting in food plots with the access road along a creek bed that had been undercut and they did not know it. Notice he was about 4 feet from the edge, normally a safe distance. This could have been a deadly event. Taking the extra time to look at stream beds after rains is a must, get off the machinery or ATVs and look. There is no other way to find the hidden danger. Also note, he had folded his ROPS (Roll Over Protection System) so there was no protection.

How can you avoid this happening to you? Start by following these steps:

1. Anytime you have an access road near a creek bed or stream, get off the equipment and walk the stream bed after heavy rains or flash floods or periodically with normal rains BEFORE working or accessing the field. Pay attention to your land. Look for subtle changes or things just look different.
2. Look for the undercuts, flag them with orange flagging tape on installed stakes or posts if you have no marking trees. Keep several rolls of flagging tape in your equipment to mark any danger found in the field or on the access roads to or from it.
3. Stay clear of the area until you have determined how you are going to fix the undercut or move the access road. Removing the blockage sometimes reverts the stream to its old course. Warn others.
4. On a tractor, ALWAYS wear a seat belt and have the roll over bar (ROPS) in place, not folded down. BIG MISTAKE. It will protect you in a roll over.



Here is a complete graphic of the undercut created in 2016:

Danger Undercut

