

CHILD SAFETY

Driver safety project aims to reduce number of child deaths

by Cynthia Bates and Martha Stiles

An unrestrained child involved in a 30-mile-an-hour car crash is endangered as much as a child thrown from a 30-story building, according to a California Highway Patrol (CHP) spokesperson, who cites as evidence numerous tragic examples:

- 1-year-old boy, DOA (dead on arrival), car rear-ended; mother had just lifted him from car seat to feed him
- 2-year-old girl, DOA; car broadsided by another, child unsecured in the back seat
- 1-year-old girl, DOA; car struck by a drunk driver, child wearing an adult shoulder-lap belt
- 1-year-old girl, DOA; father lost control of auto, which overturned, unrestrained child ejected from car, child safety seat found in trunk

These incidents were all preventable.

Car crashes are the leading cause of death in children. Nationwide some 50,000 injuries are annually inflicted on children riding unrestrained in cars.

In Sacramento more than 40 deaths occurred in one year because child safety seats were not used or were not used properly.

The ¡Maneje Seguro! driver safety project, based on La Loteria del Manejo Seguro (the Driver Safety Game), was developed by Center investigators to reduce these fatality and injury rates within farmworker families.

Program staff are working with the CHP, migrant housing centers, the state Office of Traffic Safety and national child injury organizations in developing written and visual child safety seat educational tools.

Current California law requires that all children under 4 years or 40 pounds use federally approved child safety seats. Unfortunately, obtaining and installing seats is not the simple answer.

According to SafetyBeltSafe, Inc., up to 70 percent of the child safety seats are installed improperly, which, in an accident, can have the same dire



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WPS unknown to farmworkers

by Don Villarejo and Celia Prado, California Institute for Rural Studies

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was introduced in 1992 and, after a period of partial implementation, the remaining regulations were promulgated in 1996. Implementation in California began in January 1997 through the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, a branch of Cal-EPA. WPS is the first comprehensive effort by a federal agency to address occupational health and safety risks associated with field worker exposure to agricultural chemicals.

Prior to WPS, comprehensive farmworker protection regulations regarding pesticide safety had been adopted in only a few states, most notably in California where significant rules have been in place for more than a quarter century. Nevertheless, even in those states, the new regulations mandate additional activities and safeguards designed to protect farmworkers from injury or illness caused by occupational pesticide exposures. WPS requires safety training for all workers who will enter crop fields where certain materials have been applied during the current crop year, as well as explicitly granting certain

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WPS Unknown to Farmers

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rights to workers, including a basic "right-to-know."

A study, funded by the Center, was conducted to determine whether farmworkers in California are aware of the new regulations, whether and how they have received the required training, and whether they believe they are at risk of pesticide illness in their workplace. Nearly 500 interviews were conducted in Spanish by Celia Prado and Luis Magaña in two California counties last summer. A total of 115 interviews were conducted at 17 sites in Yolo County (Sacramento Valley), including two farm labor camps administered by public agencies. An additional 373 interviews were conducted at nearly two dozen sites in San Joaquin County (San Joaquin Valley),

including three public farm labor camps.

Fewer than one in five workers had ever heard of the WPS or of the U.S. EPA. Most of those who claimed to know something about either could not provide anything substantive upon closer questioning. Residents of farm labor camps administered by public agencies were the most likely to have received some training (66 percent), but in most cases it was provided by nonprofit agencies, not their employer. Only a relatively few farmworkers living at private camps had received training. Overall, only about 16 percent of farmworkers said that they had received on-the-job pesticide safety training (see graph). Clearly, these results suggest that the news about WPS has not yet reached most farmworkers in California. ❖

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housing centers. The purpose of the ferias was to provide tuberculosis screening and treatment services to the resident migrant farmworkers.

Participants completed a health questionnaire and tuberculin skin test to determine tuberculosis infection status, and follow-up chest radiography and medication was prescribed as necessary. All services were provided at no cost to participants.

Desiree Arretz and Elva Miranda, resident doctors in the UC Davis Department of Internal Medicine and native Spanish speakers, provided important leadership for the project.

More than 470 individuals participated in the program. Among participants, the overall prevalence for tuberculin skin-test reactivity was approximately 17 percent.

The importance of this program was evidenced in a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) survey addressing occupational and residential characteristics of tuberculosis cases from 1985 to 1989.

That study indicated that farmworkers accounted for 5 percent of all employed cases.

A study of 2,206 pulmonary tuberculosis deaths occurring between 1979 and 1990 from the National Occupational Mortality Surveillance data base shows that the chances of farmworkers contracting TB is approximately double that of other employed adults.

These studies may underestimate the true risk for farmworkers if foreign-born workers tend to return to their home country when ill, thus escaping detection in the United States.

The CDC Advisory Committee on the Elimination of Tuberculosis has recommended that the highest priority be given to detection and diagnosis of persons with symptoms

Yolo County Interviews		Yes	No	Total
Public labor camps				21
Know of U.S. EPA?		8	13	
Know of WPS?		3	18	
Pesticide safety training?		14	7	
Private camps/apts.				64
Know of U.S. EPA?		9	55	
Know of WPS?		9	55	
Pesticide safety training?		16	48	
Stores/fields				30
Know of U.S. EPA?		9	21	
Know of WPS?		9	21	
Pesticide safety training?		9	21	
San Joaquin County Interviews		Yes	No	Total
Public labor camps				100
Aware of pesticide health risks?		91	9	
Know of WPS?		51	49	
Pesticide safety training by employer?		37	63	
Know of employer responsibilities?		86	14	
Know that U.S. EPA is responsible agency?		94	6	
Other locations				273
Aware of pesticide health risks?		189	84	
Know of WPS?		1	272	
Pesticide safety training by employer?		0	273	
Know of employer responsibilities?		145	128	
Know that EPA is responsible agency?		252	21	
Combined Yolo & SJ County Interviews				488
Pesticide safety training?		76	412	

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