

Farm Response: An Accident Preparedness Course for Farm Families

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SUMMARY. "Farm Response," an accident preparedness course, provides rescuers with the knowledge to make appropriate decisions upon reaching a farm accident situation and also forewarns them of potential dangers of the scene. The goal of the rescuer is to keep the victim alive until Emergency Medical Services arrive. The accident preparedness course, written for the untrained person and taught by

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local instructors, deals with situations involving machinery, manure storage facilities, grain bins, silos, pesticides, and electricity. Participants are also taught how to report accidents to EMS, what to include in a first aid and pesticide safety kit and how to shut off a diesel tractor. They are encouraged to obtain first aid training and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation instruction. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworth.com]

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When a rural resident is the victim of an accident, the increased time that it takes for care to be provided can affect the severity and outcome of the injury. Factors that contribute to increased response times include the absence of central dispatching (911) in rural areas, the possibility of lengthy extrication time, and the remote location of farms.

An injured farmer is usually discovered by a family member or friend. Because of the emotional involvement with the patient, the rescuer may not use good judgement, and therefore, may cause additional injury to the patient. A course called "Farm Response" teaches people to remain calm, although fear and anxiety are normal reactions when people encounter an accident victim. The ability to overcome these emotions, and to act rationally and effectively, depends on preparation which involves thinking of, reading about, and training for emergencies.

The accident preparedness material, "First on the Scene,"¹ was developed in New York State by Dennis Murphy and John Pollock, along with the Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service (NRAES). In Saskatchewan, the course was initiated by M. D. Ambulance Care Ltd. of Saskatoon in cooperation with Saskatoon District Health and the Centre for Agricultural Medicine. Tim Hillier, EMT-P, of M. D. Ambulance in Saskatoon, developed audiovisual aids to be used in conjunction with the material, transforming it into a course called "Farm Response." Tim Hillier organized and delivered "train the trainer" courses throughout Saskatchewan, and more than 70 people have been instructed. Individuals were financially responsible for the one-day training course that they received. While a few instructors were sponsored by agencies, many others paid the fee themselves. Trainers were recruited from emergency medical service personnel in the province. Many people who volunteered to be trainers for "Farm Response" were highly motivated as indicated by their willingness to pay for the cost of training when they were not sponsored by an agency.

At “Farm Response,” participants are taught how to respond to accident situations involving machinery, manure storage facilities, grain bins, silos, pesticides, and electricity. For each possible situation, algorithms illustrate proper sequencing of decisions and actions. Participants are also taught how to report accidents to Emergency Medical Services, what to include in a first aid and pesticide safety kit and how to shut off a diesel tractor. “Farm Response” includes limited first aid instruction. Participants are encouraged to obtain first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation training.

The Agricultural Health and Safety Network, which delivers health and safety information to farm families, offered the course for the first time in 1996. Between January and April, there were 45 courses offered with most courses filled to their capacity of 15 people. In total, 590 people participated, with an average age of 41.3 years. Among them, 285 (48.3%) were men and 305 (51.7%) were women.

After the course was finished, each participant was asked to complete an evaluation form, and to rate various aspects of the course on a five-point scale, with one representing “poor” and five representing “excellent” (see Table 1). More than 80 percent of the participants rated the student materials, instructor’s knowledge, logical presentation of the information, discussions, and overall organization of the program at the scores of four and five. Slide presentations need to be improved.

Most participants added comments in the space provided on the evaluation form. Participants indicated that they plan to become more conscious about farm safety, posting emergency numbers by the phone, purchasing first aid kits, and learning more about the machinery on their farm. Also, course content needs to be refined to focus on Saskatchewan farming operations. There are few silos and above-ground manure storage facilities

TABLE 1. Course Evaluation by Participants

Item	Rated at 4 or 5 (%)*
1. Rate the student materials.	81
2. Rate the slide presentations.	65
3. Was the instructor knowledgeable?	92
4. Was the information presented in a logical fashion?	90
5. Did you feel comfortable in the discussions?	92
6. Rate the overall organization of the program.	86
7. How well were your overall objectives met?	79

*A scale of one to five was used with one representing “poor” and five representing “excellent.”

in this province, so that portion of the course will be de-emphasized. Participants have requested that information regarding livestock be included.

A questionnaire to assess behaviour and knowledge was completed by all participants, at the time of the course. A second questionnaire will be sent a year later to review the course's usefulness. Questions relating to accident prevention will also be included.

Because members of the Network are spread across hundreds of miles, having instructors distributed across the province proved to be an efficient and cost-effective form of delivering "Farm Response." This methodology will be considered as a model for delivering future community-based programs to members of the Agricultural Health and Safety Network. In addition, we believe that this course will potentially benefit farm families nationwide and therefore we have taken definite steps to extend "Farm Response" to other parts of Canada.

REFERENCES

1. Murphy DJ, Pollock J, Smith G, Bean T, Sailus M. First on the scene. Ithaca, NY: Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, 1989.