



FARM SAFETY

A Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 1996

Children in Agriculture: Our Responsibility to Keep Them Safe

All children, regardless of their parents' ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and relationship to farm ownership, deserve equal protection from agricultural injuries.¹

Agriculture is one of the few occupational settings where children may actively participate in work typically performed by adults. This factor surely contributes to the unfortunate reality that children account for about 20 percent of all farm fatalities.

The National Farm Medicine Center estimates the death toll in children younger than 20 years of age on U.S. farms and ranches at 300 each year. The number of children injured on farms and ranches is many, many times higher (more than 100,000). Nearly 5,000 children must learn to live with an injury or a permanent disability from farm accidents each year.²

There is much we can do about these heartbreaking statistics. To begin:

- Acknowledge the fact that accidents associated with farming and agriculture are preventable.
- Take the time to talk with children about those dangers, whether they are your children or not.
- Provide proper supervision of children of all ages from 0 to 18 in a manner appropriate to the age.
- Give clear and well-understood directions and training to children who undertake farm work. →



Photo by Jack Kelly Clark

¹ National Committee for Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention. 1996. Children and Agriculture: Opportunities for Safety and Health. National Farm Medicine Center, Marshfield, WI.

² National Safety Council. 1995. Making the Right Choices.

Continued from page 1—

Common Dangers to Children in Farm Environments

Machinery—tractors, grain augers, PTOs, mowers, ATVs
Chemicals—pesticides, fuels, lubricants, soaps, disinfectants, solvents, and other
Grain bins and storage facilities
Water—ponds, irrigation and drainage ditches
Farm animals
Electricity

Precautions to Safeguard Children

General—Nothing can replace good supervision. Children are not miniature adults and do not, regardless of age, have the capability to always make the right judgment about safety. A 14-year-old requires supervision, as does an 18-year-old; it may be different from the supervision required by a preschooler or a 6-year-old, but it is needed nonetheless. With younger children, farm families may prevent serious injury or death by arranging for child care during busy planting and harvest seasons, even if a babysitter must be hired. If hiring a sitter is impossible, work together with other families to care for children cooperatively.

Machinery—Most farm fatalities in children are related to machinery. Make machinery off-limits to kids. Don't allow children to ride on tractors, even in a parent's arms or on a lap. Never leave a running machine unattended. Engage the parking brake and take the key when not in use. Put PTOs in neutral when idle. Always check to be sure there are no kids around or under a piece of machinery before starting and moving it. Teach the children around you—whether they are your children or not—about the dangers of farm machinery. Supervise children.

Chemicals—Keep pesticides, fuels, lubricants, soaps, disinfectants, solvents, and other chemicals in a locked storage facility. Put warning decals on containers and storage receptacles. Teach the children around you about the dangers of chemicals, particularly the younger ones who may be curious enough to ingest poisonous substances. Never put any harmful materials into food containers. Supervise children.



Photo by Jack Kelly Clark

Grain Bins—Keep children away from and out of grain bins and storage facilities. Put up warning decals to indicate danger. The danger posed by grain bins not only includes suffocation but inhalation of dust, molds, and fungi as well. Supervise children.

Ponds and Irrigation Ditches—Fence ponds and other water areas. Don't keep open buckets of water around; very small children can drown in them. Supervise children.

Farm Animals—Teach kids about handling animals in a safe manner, such as not walking behind animals that may kick. Keep younger children away from larger animals and female animals with young. Supervise children.

Electricity—Teach kids about the hazards of electricity. Keep electrical cords rolled up. Lock up electrical boxes. Supervise children.

Other Precautions—Make sure kids are dressed in appropriate clothing that will give them protection from the sun and other harmful elements. Long-sleeves, pants, good footwear, and hats will offer good protection. Teach children about good sanitation: wash hands before eating or drinking, wash fruits and vegetables before eating. Keep ladders out of reach of children. Provide appropriate supervision. ❁

Recommended Videos

The following videos on the topic of farm safety for children are highly recommended and are available through our Video Lending Library.

Making the Right Choices (age- and developmentally appropriate tasks)
 Danger: Kids at Work
 Farm Safety Camp
 The Playing Field
 Field of Danger: Children on the Farm

California Farm Safety Week

The week of September 15–21, 1996, has been declared Farm Safety Week in recognition of California being America's agricultural leader and contributing in excess of \$20 billion annually to our state's economy. National Farm Safety and Health Week was initiated in 1942 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the National Safety Council and has been recognized by Presidential Proclamations by every president since then. However, agricultural injuries and illness in California also affected more than 18,000 workers in 1994, the last year for which figures are available, according to William E. Steinke, University of California Farm Safety Program Director. Don Bennett, AgSafe Executive Director adds, "Everyone with a stake in the agricultural economy needs to work together to make California farms and ranches safer places to work and live."

From the Director . . .

The e-mail age has arrived for agricultural safety! Many folks are connected to the Internet through their employer or one of the many commercial providers. To help those of you concerned with agricultural safety in California communicate efficiently with each other, UC Davis has agreed to host a new Internet mailing list. Simply post your question to one address and it will immediately be sent to all subscribers. Possible uses include seeking answers to questions that others have faced, asking what works for training, seeking a speaker for your training session, or even finding a consultant.

The address of this new group is: cal-agsafety@ucdavis.edu To post a message, address it to that group, send, and wait for your replies to come in. The one ground rule is that only subscribers may post messages. To subscribe, send e-mail to listproc@ucdavis.edu with the following line: `subscribe cal-agsafety yourfirstname yourlastname` Please do not include a signature line. The listproc software will pick up your e-mail address and add you to the list after a brief check. You will soon receive a welcome message and instructions on how to post messages to the list. If you have any problems, please e-mail me at westeinke@ucdavis.edu and I will try to help. The list has been created for your use to help promote safe and healthy workplaces in California's agriculture. It can develop into whatever type of discussion group the users desire. Please let me know how you like this new tool. Happy e-mailing!

*William E. Steinke, Director
 Farm Safety Program*



Department of Special Collections, University of California Library, Davis, California

We know so much more about agricultural health and safety than we did a century ago. Let us make use of that knowledge.

English/Spanish Poster on Measures to Control Heat Stress

EPA and OSHA have published a bilingual poster summarizing key elements for employers and workers to follow for controlling heat stress. EPA's Worker Protection Standard for agricultural pesticides requires employers to protect workers from heat-related illness when protective gear must be worn to reduce pesticide exposure. In addition to providing basic instructions for preventing heat-related illnesses, the poster also outlines in detail the signs, symptoms, and causes of various heat-related illnesses, as well as first-aid treatment. The poster is a summary of "A Guide to Heat Stress in Agriculture, issued jointly by EPA and OSHA. Copies of the poster (Document No. 055-000-00544-3) are \$1.25 each; copies of "A Guide to Heat Stress in Agriculture" (Document No. 055-000-00474-9) are \$3.50 each. Both are available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402 (telephone 202/512-1800). Orders of 100 or more copies will receive a 25% discount.

The Farm Safety Newsletter is designed and written by Barbara Meierhenry under the direction of William E. Steinke. Please direct any comments or inquiries to the Farm Safety office, Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering, 3022 Bainer Hall, University of California, Davis, CA 95616.



The Farm Safety Program exists to help promote safety and health in the workplace. Through this newsletter we hope to keep our audience aware of the many issues of occupational hazards in agriculture. The information given herein is supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended, and no endorsement by Cooperative Extension is implied.

William E. Steinke
 William E. Steinke, Ph.D., Director
 Farm Safety Program

James M. Meyers
 James M. Meyers, Ed.D., M.P.H.
 Extension Specialist

BULK RATE
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 DAVIS, CA
 PERMIT NO. G-00268

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
 OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612-3560
 OFFICIAL BUSINESS
 PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300
 6547