



# FARM SAFETY

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1999

## Farm Machinery and Your Safety Attitude

Farm injuries usually occur because someone did not take the time to think about safety. Are you sometimes in too much of a hurry to get the job done to think about safety? Have you avoided spending the time and money on proper maintenance for your farm equipment? If so, take the time *now* to reflect on the kind of injury that can happen in an instant when one fails to take the proper safety precautions. Because farm machinery is designed to be powerful, the kinds of injuries



Farm machinery today is much more complicated and dangerous than in days gone by.  
Photo from Special Collections, Shields Library, University of California, Davis.

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that occur are usually very serious, if not fatal. A PTO, for example, used in the right way can safely power your augers, mowers, choppers, and other machinery. But if you are not religiously careful around them, a PTO can rip off your arm, crush your skull, or sever your spine.

Be proactive with safety. Anticipate future problems. Protect yourself and other workers around farm machinery by taking the time to review the dangers particular to

different kinds of farm machinery and how to work safely around them.

Augers, rotary mowers, sickle bars, and the cutter heads of forage harvesters have **shear points**, where the edges of two moving parts move together to cut. This type of machinery can cause limb amputation or death. **Do not operate these machines without proper safety shields. Always shut off engine before unclogging.**

Combines, swathers, front-end loaders, jacked-up trucks, and raised truck beds all have the danger created by **crush points**, where two moving objects move toward each other, or one moving object moves toward a stationary object. **Always use safety blocks when performing repairs or adjustments to prevent being crushed.** Even a very small, quick adjustment such as tightening a bolt warrants using safety blocks. It is not worth your life or health to save two minutes of time in not blocking up the machine.

PTOs, drivelines, hay balers, and rotary mowers, have **wrap points**, located in any machine parts that rotate. It takes a fraction of a fraction of a second for a loose thread, a shoelace, a piece of clothing to be caught from a grip from which there is no escape. In fact, the harder you pull, the tighter the machine will wrap. **Always make sure proper PTO shields are in place. Turn off the machine before making any adjustments so the shaft stops rotating. Wear snug-fitting clothes and work boots without shoelaces.**

In addition to reviewing these specific hazards, another proactive measure you can take to prevent injury is to maintain farm equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions. Equipment that is not properly maintained causes injuries. Loose wheels or cracked rims causes you to lose control of a machine. Use the off-season to do maintenance and consult the Operator's Manual to service it properly. Make sure you use parts that are recommended by the manufacturer.

Be aware that inverted U-shaped guards are **inadequate** safety shields. NIOSH reported five injury cases involving hay baler drivelines equipped with U-shaped guards, which were inadequate to prevent very serious injuries from occurring. Retrofit safety shield kits are available from the manufacturer for older New Holland balers, for instance, and newer models are equipped with a guard that fully encloses the driveline. A farmer purchasing used machinery may be unaware of any retrofit guards available from the manufacturer and therefore may be using inadequately guarded machines. Sometimes shields are offered free. **Check with the manufacturer of your equipment to see if retrofit safety shield kits are available.** Take action **before** an injury forces you to take action. Even the most expensive shield costs less than a day in the hospital.

*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.*



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## What's Your Safety Attitude?

Developing a safety attitude may spare you or someone you know from suffering an amputation, a spinal cord injury, or a fatality. Having a safety attitude means:

- ◆ You are aware of where and what the hazards are.
- ◆ You are prepared. You maintain the equipment properly and know that everything works safely.
- ◆ You use the Operator's Manual for the specific equipment you are using.
- ◆ You shield all moving parts.
- ◆ You respect PTOs. They are among the most dangerous parts of machinery.
- ◆ You shut off the engine and disengage the PTO before working on equipment, even for a minor repair or tightening of a bolt.
- ◆ You watch yourself. You stop working when you are tired.
- ◆ You use equipment for its designed purpose.

## Farm Safety Newsletter Subscriber List Updated/Redone

In the previous issue of Farm Safety, we indicated we would be reconstructing our list of subscribers and encouraged those who have access to the Internet to read the newsletter online:

**([www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~bae/FarmSafety/FARMSAF.HTML](http://www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~bae/FarmSafety/FARMSAF.HTML)).**

The newsletter contained a form to send in to indicate your preference for continuing to receive a hard copy of the newsletter or for receiving an e-mail notice that the most current issue was available online. We heard from many subscribers and have placed those names in either a bulk mailing list or in our e-mail address book. If you did not send in the form provided and still wish to be put on one of the lists, or you have colleagues who wish to be added, telephone our office at (530)752-0563 or send us a note at: *Farm Safety Program, Biological & Agricultural Engineering Department, University of California, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616.*

*Photo from Special Collections, Shields Library, University of California, Davis. →*

## Child Labor Law in Action

Our previous issue of *Farm Safety* presented information on child labor laws in California and pointed out that California has some of the strictest laws in the nation. Illustrating not only how child labor laws work, but also how universally dangerous agricultural work settings are to children, the following news article appeared in a recent issue of Gempler's ALERT. Note that the story reports on implementation of federal child labor laws; we do not know how the state laws affected this case.

The recent death of the 9-year-old son of a Michigan farmworker who was accidentally run over while his father was harvesting blueberries resulted in an \$11,175 fine to the farm owners for violations of federal child labor laws.

A spokesman for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), which charged Bowerman Blueberries of Holland, Michigan, with violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), told [Gempler's] ALERT that the youth and his 11-year-old cousin were working in the field at the time the incident occurred.

Although the owners of the farm have indicated they did not hire the youths and did not know they were working, DOL views the youths as "employees." The farm owners are appealing the fine.

The tragedy occurred last July. The farmworker, who was supplied by a farm labor contractor, was driving a truck in the field while harvesting blueberries. According to DOL, the 9-year-old boy was helping his father by loading crates into the back of the truck. The boy apparently jumped off the back of the truck, then tried to get back on, but fell. He was accidentally run over by his father, who did not see him.

*(Continued on p. 4)*



**Internet address: [www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~bae/FarmSafety/FARMSAF.HTML](http://www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~bae/FarmSafety/FARMSAF.HTML)**

*Child Labor Law (continued from p. 3)*

All agricultural employers who employ non-family member minors under the age of 16 must comply with the FLSA's child labor provisions. In recent months, DOL has been stepping up its enforcement of child labor laws, and has especially been targeting ag/hort employers.

Attorney Christopher Robinson of Fisher & Phillips in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, says it's critical that ag employers regularly "get out in the field, interview workers, and do spot checks to ensure compliance" with child labor laws by their farm labor contractors.

"If minors are spotted out in a field by the government, then these minors are presumed to be working," Robinson says. He suggests that if at all possible, ***underage youths should not be allowed to be present at or near the work site, regardless of their purpose for being there.***

*This material was excerpted with permission from Gempler's ALERT, the newsletter of Ag/Hort safety and employment law compliance, published monthly by GEMPLER'S Inc., 800/382-8473.*

## CPSC Unveils New Web Site for Kids



The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has unveiled a new and improved kid safety web site designed to educate children about safety issues that they encounter every day, from hazards around the home to preventing injuries while playing sports.

Located at [www.cpsc.gov/kids/kids.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/kids/kids.html), the CPSC web site is designed for children ages 8 to 12. Using educational, interactive and fun activities, the web site teaches kids how to be safe in their homes. Featured on the site are a memory game disguised as a virtual home full of safety tips, a hangman game that provides clues to safety terms, an interactive safety game that challenges the player to catch the safety items but dodge unsafe items, and a few puzzles to test a child's overall safety knowledge.

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