

An Unsafe Haven

National Farm Safety & Health Week
Sept. 19-25

In 1992 alone, 1,200 people died in farm-related accidents in the United States. This represents more than 14 percent of the on-the-job fatalities in that year. Safety and health education can play an important role in reducing fatalities and injuries on farms.

This year is the 50th anniversary of National Farm Safety and Health Week. During the week of Sept. 19-25, the National Safety Council encourages all Americans to put special emphasis on farm safety.

Throughout the 49 years of this observance, progress has been made in some areas: Farmers, farm workers and family members are safer when working with animals, around water and in weather-related emergencies. But there is still much to do.

People working in agriculture are at risk when operating tractors and farm machinery. Children are especially vulnerable when they are carried as extra-riders on tractors and machinery. Elderly farmers' risk of death from tractor accidents is two to three times higher than other farmers.

Factors that contribute to accidents on farms

1. *Many farmers, farm families and farmsteads are not covered by OSHA and other federal regulations or standards. An exception is the EPA Worker Protection Standard which requires farmers to comply with agricultural pesticide labels.*

Most construction sites, industrial plants and mining operations must comply with a multitude of federal and state regulations and standards, including posting, training requirements and the use of protective gear.

2. *Most farmers and their families live, work and play at the worksite.*

Construction personnel, factory workers and miners and their families do not live or have recreational activities at their worksite.

3. *Many farmers farm actively past age 65, often farming until age 75 to 80.*

In many occupations the normal retirement age is 65. Given the effects of aging, farmers may be at a higher risk for accidental injury and death when performing some farming chores.

4. *Many farmers permit their children to operate farm tractors and some machinery before they are allowed to obtain a driver's license.*

WARNING

The following information may save your life. Proceed with caution, careful reading and consideration for your family and livestock.

Federal and state laws do not allow children to be on worksites or operate equipment until they are properly trained through apprenticeships or certification programs offered by the 4-H or FFA youth organizations.

5. *Many farmers operate a diverse group of machinery and equipment each work day, which can put farmers at increased risk.*

Most construction, factory and mine workers are specifically trained to perform certain tasks or chores and are trained on equipment which is necessary to conduct their jobs.

6. *Most farmers work more than eight hours per day, especially livestock producers and dairy farmers who have chores which must be undertaken seven days per week. Longer work hours can cause fatigue and may increase the chances of an accident when operating farm machinery.*

Workers in other occupations typically work an eight-hour day, five days a week.

7. *Commodity price swings, weather-related delays and equipment breakdowns all contribute to high levels of stress among farmers.*

As private business owners, farmers must deal with the hardships and constraints which influence their daily operations.

8. *Most farmers work alone during a large portion of each work day.*

Many farm chores are performed by individual farmers, with no fellow workers who can provide assistance in the event of an emergency.

9. *Many farm chores must be completed during twilight or nighttime hours.*

Many farmers begin work before daylight and often do not complete their farm chores before dark. During harvest season and in order to beat pending bad weather, farmers may perform field work well into the night.

10. *Many farmers must work with large and/or unpredictable livestock, which are capable of inflicting personal injury.*

Cattle can weigh 1,000 pounds or more, while other livestock may be dangerous when protecting young. These scenarios can place livestock farmers at risk.

Editor's note: This information is provided by the National Safety Council.