

Farm Safety Story Contains Strong Message

Numbers always tell a story. For agriculture, the plot contains some stark statistics:

- About 28 of every 100,000 farmers and their employees died of work injuries in 2006. Five years ago, the death rate from work injuries was 30 per 100,000 farmers.¹
- Six of every 100 farmers and farm workers were injured on the job that same year.²

Agriculture's death rate places the industry first among all occupations. Mining ranks second with 27 work deaths per 100,000 employees. Construction deaths are third on the list with 10 deaths per 100,000 workers.

The injury rate ranks agriculture second behind the transportation/warehousing industry, which has an average of 6.5 injuries per 100 workers. Manufacturing ties with agriculture in its injury rate per 100 employees.

Farmers and their families can ill afford the pain and inconvenience of workplace injuries and death. Farmers typically lose four days for every injury they suffer. Yet the daily duties of feeding and caring for livestock, and planting, tending and harvesting crops continue.

“These numbers represent the people who work hard to produce the world's food,” said Glen Hetzel, 2007-08 president of the National Institute for Farm Safety (NIFS). “The story behind the numbers serves as an important reminder of the continuing need to spread the agricultural safety education and awareness message. There is no better time to do that than this week during National Farm Safety and Health Week. ”

Hetzel noted that 60 percent of farm injuries occur when working with large, unpredictable livestock. Most other injuries happen during crop production with machinery accidents accounting for most injuries.

The overwhelming majority of injuries occur among workers aged 45 and older. The average age of U.S. farmers is 56.

“The number of agricultural deaths and injuries has fallen gradually during the last four years,” said Hetzel. “Safer equipment and increased safety awareness make a difference.”

The National Institute for Farm Safety is dedicated to the professional development of agricultural safety and health professionals; providing national and international leadership in preventing agricultural injuries and illnesses to the agricultural community. The nonprofit organization provides opportunities for sharing information about research and intervention programs, improving professional skills and knowledge, networking and other supportive activities.

(See the attached list for National Institute of Farm Safety members who have agreed to be available for media interviews.)

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

² National Safety Council®, Injury Facts® 2008 Edition