

NIFS: “Rural Roadway Safety...Alert, Aware & Alive” Offers Opportunities

By Bernard Geschke, President, National Institute for Farm Safety

“Rural Roadway Safety...Alert, Aware & Alive,” the slogan of National Farm Safety & Health Week 2009, is especially timely as the week runs Sept. 20-26, on the cusp of the harvest season.

Commemorating the hard work, diligence and sacrifices of our nation’s farmers and ranchers is appropriate throughout the year, but becomes a more poignant observance as the bounty of American agriculture throughout our nation grows to maturity, is harvested and enjoyed by consumers.

For agricultural safety and health professionals who live and work in rural America, sharing farmers’ pride and excitement about the harvest season is tempered by the continued, urgent need to foster increased understanding regarding the prevention of ag-related injuries and illness.

At the National Institute for Farm Safety (NIFS), we’re concentrating our efforts on increasing awareness of National Farm Safety & Health Week and the practical applications of this year’s slogan among agricultural safety and health professionals, some of whom are newcomers to their vocation as well as farming and ranching.

Promoting this year’s key message, that motor vehicle-ag equipment collisions are preventable, offers safety and health professionals a fresh opportunity to interact with and educate people in their communities. We encourage them to make the most of every opportunity to communicate about this, especially regarding awareness and recognition of roadway hazards by both producers and other drivers.

We’re also encouraging safety and health professionals to make the best possible use of the wealth of resources available to them on this subject that remains so important to rural America, and ask that they continue to share these materials with producers and legislators.

This year’s safety and health week slogan dovetails with a statement made by a charter member of NIFS: “Members...are charged with the responsibility of uncovering new hazards, developing new solutions as needed and polishing old ones, accompanied by convincing methods of applying the same.”

Before, during and after National Farm Safety & Health Week 2009, we at NIFS offer our support to agricultural safety and health professionals as they dedicate themselves to their important mission.