



US Ag Centers ready for National Farm Safety and Health Week

September 8, 2014

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The 10 U.S. Agricultural Centers funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) urge everyone involved in agriculture to recognize National Farm Safety and Health Week (September 21-27) and promote awareness of safety solutions year round.

The 2014 safety week theme is, "Safety Counts: Protecting what Matters." The U.S. Agricultural Centers address that theme with their special regional and collective expertise.

"The theme underscores the importance of us all working together to build a safer and healthier agricultural work place," said Scott Heiberger, US Ag Centers spokesman.

A great starting point for tapping into the Centers' resources is their YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/USagCenters. The channel features more than 40 videos available for Extension agents/educators, agricultural science teachers, producers/owner/operators, first responders and agricultural families.

NIOSH, within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), funds nine regional Centers for Agricultural Disease and Injury Research, Education, and Prevention and one National Center to address children's farm safety. The centers are distributed throughout the nation to be responsive to the agricultural safety and health issues unique to particular areas.

Links to the Centers can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/oep/agctrhom.html>.

The Ag Centers were established by Congress in 1990 in response to evidence that agricultural workers were suffering substantially higher rates of occupational injury and illness than other U.S. workers.

These Centers, part of the NIOSH Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing program, represent the only substantive federal effort to meet the obligation to ensure safe working conditions for workers in one of our nation's largest and most vital production sectors. Nearly 80 percent of agriculture, forestry and fishing operators employ fewer than 10 workers, and most rely on family members and/or immigrant, part-time, contract and seasonal labor. Thus, many of these workers are excluded from labor protections, including many enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

"These Ag Center resources can be especially relevant during harvest season, as farmers are putting in long hours under the stress of weather delays, equipment breakdowns, and high operating costs," Heiberger said.

For more information on National Farm Safety and Health Week, and safety resources, visit the website of the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety, <http://www.necasag.org/>.