

## Farm workers face dangers

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Many occupations are hazardous, few more so than agricultural labor. Farmers recognize that they must be diligent in their efforts to prevent nonfatal and fatal injuries.

According to the most recent statistics, farmers face a fatality rate of 25.1 for every 100,000 workers. In 2008, 456 farmers and farm workers lost their lives to work-related injuries.

What's particularly risky about agricultural work is that it tends to be a family profession. That puts all members of the family at risk for injury. On average, 113 youth under the age of 20 die annually from farm-related injuries.

Tractor rollover injuries, inhalation of chemical pesticides and lacerations from farm equipment top the list of prime agriculture-related occupational injuries. With scores of different mechanical equipment and chemicals, not to mention lengthy exposure to the elements on a normal working day, the risk of injury is considerable.

There are key ways to prevent injuries on the farm. Here are a few considerations.

Proper training of new employees on the use required equipment is essential. If certification is needed, be sure employees have been trained and practice on equipment prior to independent use. Safety gear should be used at all times, when required. Workers should be careful to keep hair tied back to prevent entanglement in equipment.

Care should be used when working in the elements. Workers should be properly dressed for the temperature and conditions. Beverage breaks should be taken so that dehydration is not a risk.

Knowledge of chemical pesticides and fertilizers should be fully understood. Safety equipment, such as ventilators, eye guards and gloves, should be used when handling caustic chemicals.

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Machinery should be maintained according to OSHA and other federal guidelines. Equipment in good working order is less likely to cause injury.

Caution should always be used around livestock.

Operating equipment when impaired is a hazard in any profession. Alcohol and drug use do not mix in a farm setting. Individuals who seem intoxicated should not be allowed to work.

Children and adolescents should be carefully monitored around the farm. Because of their developing bodies, youngsters should not be allowed to do any activity that is overly strenuous and might tax growing bodies, such as heavy lifting.

There should be training in general first aid and CPR so that help can be given to an injured worker before a response team is able to make it to the location.