

# Teach summer farm workers safe habits

NEWARK, Del. — With the end of school and start of the growing season, area farmers are hiring seasonal help. Many of these young workers have limited experience or skills, yet many may use or be exposed to potentially dangerous equipment or chemicals.

By teaching them about farm hazards and how to do their jobs properly, employers can greatly reduce farm-related accidents this summer, says University of Delaware extension farm safety specialist Ron Jester.

"Looking back over my own boyhood on a farm, operating machines, logging, maintaining buildings, raising broilers, running irrigation systems and much more," Jester says, "I realize how little safety training we got. And most of that was pretty superficial."

He says the situation is much the same today on many farms — especially family-operated farms. "One tends to assume an employee's or family member's previous knowledge and skill. But the risks are too great to take these things for granted," the specialist says. Instead, he urges farmers to make sure all workers do their jobs properly and safely — especially when new equipment or a new process is involved.

"Some people question the relevance of safety training for

family-operated farms," Jester says. "But such training has value regardless of how many people you employ. Accident prevention is an individual concern. Actually, it's even more important in small operations like family farms because a disabling injury affects a larger percentage of the work force."

Child labor laws require training 14- and 15-year-olds who are employed in a number of hazardous farm jobs. This law doesn't include youth working for their parents or guardians, or those over 16. But the need to train them, too, is obvious, the specialist says. A recent study by the National Safety Council shows that workers under 24 years of age suffer a disproportionate number of severe and fatal accidents for their representation in the work force and exposure to hazards.

"All the evidence points to the need for safety training of employees — especially the younger ones," Jester says.

Training won't eliminate all accidents. And it can't take the place of good safety practices. It's not a substitute for guards on equipment, efficient ventilation systems, roll-over protection on tractors, well maintained tools or personal protective equipment. Eliminating or minimizing hazards is as important as training

workers to do their jobs safely.

Monitoring employees' work habits is also important, the specialist says. "Periodically check to make sure your training is effective — that workers are performing tasks and operating equipment correctly. Without monitoring and enforcement, safety training lacks meaning and employees have less incentive to put that training to use."

Agriculture has a poor accident record compared to other in-

dustries. In them, safety training is required by OSHA, though many companies would provide it anyway because they know it pays off. Some even offer off-the-job training because they realize that lost time — for whatever reason — is costly. Considering this cost, safety education pays big dividends, Jester says. It also shows workers that management has a genuine concern for their well-being, and this benefits morale.

"Safety isn't a liability that slows you down," he concludes. "It's an asset that speeds progress, no matter what you're doing. Why not follow industry's example and put safety training to work on your farm?"

For information on safety training programs provided by the Delaware Cooperative Extension Service, contact extension safety specialist Ron Jester at the University of Delaware Georgetown Substation (856-5250).

## Conservation awards program announced

HARRISBURG — State Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hollowell Monday said that Pennsylvania farmers who demonstrate practical ways to conserve soil and water in their farm operations are eligible to take part in a national soil and water conservation awards program.

This year's second annual awards program is sponsored by the National Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation and the DuPont Company. Three national winners each receive \$1,000 awards.

Hollowell urged Pennsylvania conservation farmers to take part in the program, which is designed to recognize individual farmers

who employ sound, innovative and cost-effective soil and water conservation techniques. "Pennsylvania farmers deserve recognition and encouragement for their efforts as stewards of our precious natural resources," the Secretary said. "Through this program, their initiatives can be brought to the attention of the agricultural community and the general public."

A coordinating committee of farm, conservation and government leaders selects a conservation farmer/rancher from each state. The state coordinator is Vernal C. Miles, Land Improvement Contractors Association of America, 336 West 16th Street, New Cumberland, PA 17070. Hollowell said farmers wishing more information on the program should contact Miles at the above address.

The Endowment Technical

Advisory Committee reviews the conservation work of the 50 state nominees and selects ten national finalists on the basis of their accomplishments in soil and water resource management and pollution abatement. The national finalists and their spouses receive an expense-paid trip to Washington to attend a national awards ceremony in the fall.

Winners in the 1983 awards program were from Kentucky, Oregon and Wisconsin. Other finalists were from Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina and Utah.

The National Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation, established in June 1982, is a non-profit, privately funded non-political organization dedicated to conserving natural resources and fostering a sense of stewardship for the land.

## Nursery receipts increase

HARRISBURG — Gross receipts of the Commonwealth's 3,930 certified nurseries and dealers totaled \$315.2 million in 1983, up three percent from 1981 figures, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

The 1983 statistics show retail sales of \$233.4 million, accounting for approximately 74 percent of the total receipts. Sales by certified nurseries were responsible for 48 percent of the total receipts, while 52 percent of the receipts were for products. The breakdown by product-source sales were: 35

percent self-grown; 32 percent purchased from other Pennsylvania establishments; and 33 percent purchased from out-of-state concerns.

Last year, the nursery and landscaping industry provided employment for 18,773 workers with 42 percent of the total employed in a fulltime basis. In addition, 3,319 unpaid family members also worked in the industry. Salaries and wages paid totaled \$91.8 million, and expenditures for services such as fertilizing, spraying, etc. totaled \$7 million.

The 1983 market value of land, structures and equipment used in Pennsylvania's nursery and landscaping industry totaled \$481.8 million. A total of 21,566 acres were utilized in nursery operations during the period. Land used by operators of nursery product enterprises for all agricultural operations, including nurseries, totaled 136,245 acres.

Greenhouse area totaled 16.9 million square feet, while cold frames covered 2.9 million square feet. Shaded areas covered 2.6 million square feet and sales and storage areas covered 7.5 million square feet.

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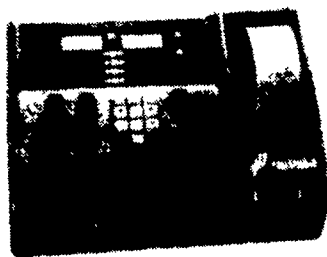
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