

Purdue Univ. Examines Farm Safety

The Older Farmer and Accidents

Each year over three hundred people age 60 and over are killed in the United States as the result of farm-related accidents. The numbers killed are unique to agriculture; agriculture is the only major industry where large numbers of people age 60 and over remain active.

A study of accidents involving farmers over the age of sixty has been conducted by Purdue University. The following are some of their conclusions:

- A significant percentage of fatal farm accidents occur to older persons living on farms, operating tractors or other farm machinery. Thus, these people run a significant risk of having a fatal farm accident.

- Tractor accidents accounted for the majority of the deaths, with other machinery accidents second.

- Most deaths occur at the middle and end of the week.

- The greatest number of accidents occur right before lunch and right before dinner when a person is most in need of a break.

- Frequency of accidents is highest in those months when seasonal labor demands are highest.

- Fatal accidents generally result in instant or quick death; medical attention must be prompt if it is to be effective.

Their recommendations were:

- Accident prevention programs aimed at the older person should focus on tractor driving and machinery safety.

- Accident prevention programs should also focus on the effects of aging. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that reactions and response times are slower, and balance is impaired, whether a person realizes it or not.

- Because many persons age 60 and over do not farm alone, but with a younger family member, programs should be developed for younger family members to make them aware of the problem and to help them reach the older person.

- Older persons need to be especially diligent during planting and harvesting when they may be called upon for temporary help.

- Older persons should be especially careful about exceeding their capacities, due to fatigue and/or mental or physical overload, for example.

(From NIFS Paper 86-6, Farm Related Fatalities Involving Persons 60 Years of Age and Older, Purschwitz and Field, Purdue University).

Unguarded PTO's Continue to Claim Lives!

In 1976 OSHA adopted a Machine Guarding Standard. Most of that standard applied to new machinery by requiring manufacturers to supply certain guards. However, one aspect of the standard required guards despite of the age of the equipment. Unguarded power-take-off shafts (PTO) were deemed dangerous enough to warrant requiring remanufacturing of shields to fit old equipment.

Ten years later we are still suffering losses due to unguarded PTO's.

Case Histories

Case 1

A 10-year-old boy died instantly as a result of massive mutilation as he attempted to jump from a fence line feed bunk to the drawbar of a moving tractor and feed wagon being operated by his father. The father reported that he had never known of any shielding being in place on the implement input driveline, but that there was a master shield in place on the tractor being used at the time.

Case 2

In the early fall, the wife of a

part-time farmer was killed as she tried to help her son operate a post hole digger. She died from a crushed chest and internal injuries which resulted when her nylon jacket became entangled as she was attempting to apply downward force on the frame of the digger. The son had just performed this action and was going around the

tractor to increase the speed when he noticed his mother pushing down on the frame and told her to stop. At this time the front of her coat wrapped around the bare implement input driveline shaft. Though the tractor was running at idle speed, and the son was able to shut the engine off almost immediately, the jacket had wrapped

tightly enough to kill the woman. There was no shielding supplied with the implement input driveline when purchased new by the husband and none had ever been installed. The master shield on the rear of the tractor was also missing at the time of the accident.

This year's Farm Safety Week is September 21-27. The theme is "Be

Protected from the Unexpected." Between now and September make guarding PTO's and putting roll-over protective structures (ROPS) on all your equipment a number one priority.

(Case studies from NIFS Paper 86-2, Summary of On-Farm PTO-Related Fatalities, Campbell and Field, Purdue University)

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