

Delaware Observes Farm Safety Week

NEWARK, Del. — Gov. Mike Castle has proclaimed the week of September 21-27 as Farm Safety Week in Delaware. This coincides with the 43rd observance of annual National Farm Safety Week, which is sponsored by the National Safety Council and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Last year over 400 disabling farm injuries occurred in Delaware. Castle's action points out the need for continued emphasis on farm safety in the state. According to Ron Jester, University of Delaware extension safety specialist, most of these accidents were preventable.

"Be Protected from the Unexpected"—the theme for this year's farm safety campaign—stresses the need for preventive safety measures. "People who work on farms suffer more than their share

of personal and economic loss from accidents and work-related illnesses," Jester says. "Much of this loss could be avoided if they took the extra steps to protect themselves ahead of time from potential hazards."

"Farmers have much to gain by making safety a priority in their operations," Jester says. "Agriculture remains one of the nation's three most hazardous industries in terms of accidental deaths per 100,000 workers. Mining and construction are the other two most hazardous occupations. Farm safety leaders are convinced that on-going safety education and product safety efforts can continue to reduce the number of agricultural accidents."

For example, if every tractor used for field or road work was equipped with a roll-over

protective structure (ROPS) such as a cab or frame, and every operator wore his or her safety belt, crippling and fatal injuries from overturns would be rarities. But because less than one-third of the nation's tractors are equipped with ROPS, the specialist says overturns are still a major contributor to agriculture's steep death and injury rates.

National Safety Council figures indicate that the average cost of a disabling work injury (in all industries) is approximately \$12,000. Fatal work injuries cost about \$410,000. Separate figures for agriculture are not available. However, Jack Burke, manager of the council's agricultural department, estimates that accidents and fires cost U.S. farm families close to \$5 billion a year.



Delaware Gov. Mike Castle is flanked by Extension Director Richard Fowler (left) and Extension Safety Specialist Ron Jester while signing Farm Safety Week proclamation.

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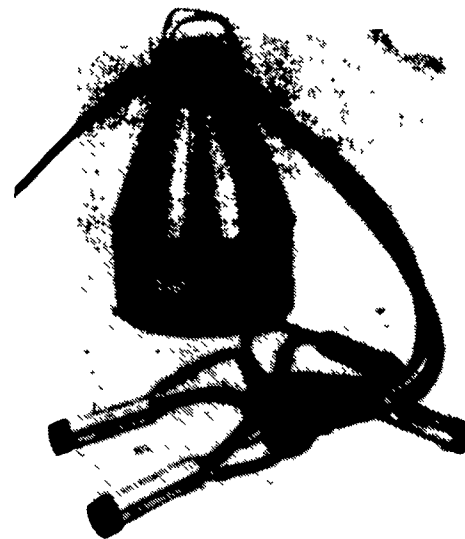
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