

# Seminar To Probe Accident Prevention: Mechanical, Airborne

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New York Correspondent

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — For weeks after a farmer loses his fingers to a corn chopper, or is strangled by his shirt entangled in a power take-off, he and his accident are the topic of conversation amongst farmers for miles around. Wives ask their husbands what they should do if they ever find them in similar situations. Farmers ask each other how it happened and why.

Nobody talks about farmer Smith's flu-like symptoms that sent him to bed for several days after he unloaded his silo last fall.

Nobody perhaps, but Drs. John May and David Pratt, who identified Silo Unloader's Syndrome as the fever, chills, muscle aches and weakness which may appear 4 to 8 hours after exposure to large amounts of dust encountered in unloading a non-oxygen limited silo.

Farming is now the most dangerous occupation in the country. But it doesn't have to be that way say these two physicians, who were alarmed by the discovery that 120 of 475 farm workers in Otsego County were injured or died in a one-year period.

The two pulmonary specialists have done extensive research into the respiratory problems of farm-

ers, focusing on the very serious Farmers' Lung Disease, and identifying the two temporarily debilitating conditions of Silo Unloader's Syndrome and Silo Filler's Disease.

They are pooling their knowledge, which includes the results of a study of more than 250 Otsego County farms, and capitalizing on an \$8,000 grant from Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative Association, a \$2,000 grant from the New York State Grange, and another grant from the New York State Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Training Program, to conduct workshops for farmers.

Dubbed FARMSAFE, the seminars are targeted at bringing home the dangers and risks of farming to the people who need the information the most — farmers themselves.

The seminars will go beyond describing the dangers of farming, and reveal ways farmers can prevent accidents — what personal safety equipment to wear, how to avoid machinery injuries, what practices will help prevent exposure to toxic spores, molds, fungi and chemicals.

May and Pratt co-direct the Bassett Farm Safety and Health Project at the Columbia-University affiliated Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in

Cooperstown, N.Y. They may be the only doctors in the country focusing on farm safety and health, and have applied for a three-year, \$1.2 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control, aimed at detailing all farm accidents in New York state.

They have learned that Silo Unloader's Syndrome is caused by exposure to high levels of fungal spores and mold in the layer of rotted forage at the top of silos, and have noted that even if the symptoms necessitate a brief hospitalization, the damage is not permanent. There are no measurable changes in lung capacity or lung scarring as a result.

Silo Filler's Disease, however, can be fatal. It results from the humidification in the lungs of the gas NO<sub>2</sub>, generated by corn during the first few days following ensilage.

Farmers' lung disease is an allergic reaction which in some ways behaves like poison ivy. Some people can have a long exposure without any effect, others become its victim with only minor contact. Inhaled spores and bacteria that grow in environments above 125 degrees, such as in wet hay and silage, cause the disease.

FARMSAFE will feature presentations by national experts in many areas of farm safety, health and accident prevention. The sessions will be video taped and the doctors plan to make the tapes available to farmers in New York and other states who are unable to attend the seminars, through a variety of organizations, including Cooperative Extensions.

The physicians recognize the stress farmers are under as a



Dr. David Pratt, seated, and Dr. John May will present a series of seminars discussing the problems of disease and injury for farmers.

## Streambank Protection Guidelines Offered

LEESPORT — "Large scale efforts to control soil erosion have been underway in the United States since the dust bowl days of the 1930's when wind erosion turned much of the fertile farming areas of the great plains into a virtual wasteland," says John Fior of the USDA Soil Conservation Service. Initial soil conservation efforts were directed toward saving topsoil in agricultural areas. However, as the value and use of land near streams increased, the need for effective streambank protection techniques quickly became apparent. Many miles of streambanks along major waterways have been protected as part of navigation and flood control projects.

However, many streams still need bank protection. "A 1969 study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers showed that of the 7 million miles of streambanks in the United States, 550,000 miles were experiencing some degree of erosion, where 148,000 miles or 2 percent were being severely eroded," says Fior. The annual economic losses occurring as a result of the severe erosion alone approached 90 million dollars in 1969.

"In recognition of the serious economic losses occurring throughout the United States due to streambank erosion, Congress authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a 7-year study to examine the causes of streambank erosion and evaluate the effectiveness of existing and experimental methods of streambank protection," says Fior. The final report was submitted to Congress in April 1982. Congress requested the Corps to develop a streambank protection pamphlet covering current knowledge of streambank protection methods. This material was to be made available to landowners, local government, and professionals in the field.

"As a result, "Streambank Protection Guidelines" was published in October 1983 and is available to the general public," says Fior. Copies of this

publication may be obtained from the U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station, Attention: Public Affairs Office, P.O. Box 631, Vicksburg, Mississippi 39180.

result of a poor farm economy, but point out that farm accidents, injuries and disease are always economically and physically debilitating to farmers.

The first FARMSAFE seminars are planned for Nov. 13 in Watertown and Nov. 20 in New Hartford. Two more seminars will be held in March in Jamestown and Batavia.

Farming has improved its safety record in recent years, but the improvement in farm safety has not kept pace with the im-

provement in other industries.

There are now 50 injuries a year for every 1,000 farmers, and 58 deaths for every 100,000 farmers. Pratt and May do not believe federal or state regulation is the way to improve the farm safety record.

Regulation, they say, will backfire. Education is the way to go — educate farmers on the economic disadvantages of injury and teach them how to avoid the dangers and pitfalls of their industry.

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