

Latest Statistics: Farming Is Hazardous

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Last year, 35 people in Pennsylvania lost their lives in accidents related to farming, according to the latest farm safety and health statistics compiled by Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Dr. Dennis Murphy, professor of agricultural engineering, analyzed death reports and other sources of information to develop a statistical picture of fatal farm accidents in Pennsylvania last year.

The summary of 1994 shows an overall decline from 1993, but the number of fatal incidents remains high.

"Pennsylvania farm fatalities dropped from 48 in 1993 to 35 in 1994," Murphy said. "Numerically, that may seem like a significant drop, but it's still tragic when you consider that 35 people died from incidents that were, for the most part, preventable."

A comparison with past years puts it in perspective. In 1992, 47 Pennsylvanians died in farm-related accidents. In 1991, 32 people died, and in 1990, 50 people died. The numbers don't vary by much.

"Each year that we see a decline in the number of farm deaths, we hope it is an indication of a long-term trend — not just a blip in the statistics," Murphy said. "We have seen fatalities drop before, only to see the number rebound in later years."

Tractors played a role in 16 fatal accidents in 1994. Eleven people were killed in tractor overturns. "Many such deaths can be prevented by a rollover protective structure, or ROPS, on a tractor," Murphy said.

Another tractor-related incident involved an extra rider on a tractor, while three tractor operators were run over on the ground. One operator died when he was thrown from the tractor.

Accidents involving machinery declined by nearly half, but still accounted for seven deaths. Machinery involved in the deaths included a corn chopper, a wagon, a baler, a manure spreader, a pay loader, backhoe and a bulldozer.

There was one animal-related death in 1994, involving a bull. Four people died when they fell from heights. One person was struck by an object. Two were overcome by gas. One was killed by a truck and one drowned in a farm pond.

The greatest number of deaths occurred in August, with September and May close behind.

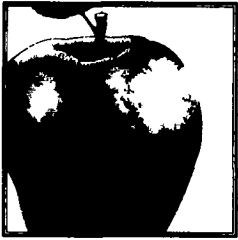
Once again in 1994, farm fatalities took their toll without regard to age. Four children under age 15 were killed on farms, while people over age 65 accounted for 11 deaths. People between the ages of 15 and 65 accounted for 20 deaths.

In all, 659 farm fatalities have occurred in Pennsylvania since 1980.

For more information about agricultural safety and health issues, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county, or call the Agricultural and Biological Engineering Extension office at (814) 865-7685.

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RUSSELL CARPENTER

Course To Teach Fire, Rescue Personnel

(Continued from Page A1)

recover victims of farm accidents.

The course included video presentations, coursework, presentations, tests, and other methods of showing how accidents occur and what to do about them.

Now, the Irishtown Fire Company and the county farm bureau are working to develop three-day courses to overview what Feeser learned at the FARMEDIC course in Alfred, N.Y.

The course will run Tuesday, Sept. 19 and Thursday, Sept. 21 from 7:30 p.m.-10 p.m. at the Irishtown Fire Hall. A special hands-on "equipment" day is scheduled for next Saturday, Sept. 23, at the fire hall.

The course is open to fire department, EMS, and rescue personnel in the county. Cost of the course is \$65 per person.

Some of the equipment that will be used to train personnel at the course include a one-row corn picker; a 250-gallon, 12-row spray rig, and a 1,000-gallon five-person Darley engine. The company is working to secure additional equipment for later instruction.

Also, the Adams County Fire-fighting Association is planning two additional courses to run Oct. 9, 11, and 14, and Nov. 20, 22, and 25.

At the FARMEDIC course in New York, instruction included the following:

- Power takeoff (PTO) shaft dangers. In one demonstration, a dummy was placed next to the yoke of a PTO shaft running at very low idle. It was used to show how fast an operator can be pulled into the PTO shaft by a piece of baler twine. It took only a few seconds, at very low idle, but it convinced the students about the real and present danger.

- Grain auger dangers. A grain auger, encased in clear PVC, shows what happens when a glove (in this case, containing raw meat and sewn shut) is caught in the auger, operated by a simple drill. The conditions of the glove, to represent a human hand, were shown. "In a way it's kind of sick," said Feeser, "but the bad part is, if you ever go into a farm accident where somebody's caught up into a grain elevator of this sort, it's not a pretty sight." A video of a boy who



At the FARMEDIC course, a dummy is wrapped around the PTO in a manner of seconds.

lost his arms to an auger accident was shown.

- Tractor rollover dangers. A simple demonstration using a remote controlled tractor at 1/32 scale showed the effects of having no rollover protective structure (ROPS) installed, and how easily a

tractor can tip over.

- Flail equipment demonstration dangers. A dummy resembling a teenager was dressed to show how quickly, even at very low idle, someone can be pulled in and ground to bits. The demonstrations had a large impact on the

students.

- Silo and related fire dangers. A video showed rescue of personnel who didn't properly treat a silo fire.

- Barn fires. One video showed a team that didn't know quite what

(Turn to Page A26)



Some of the equipment that will be used to train personnel at the course include this one-row corn picker.

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