

Farm workers face dangers

MCT — Many occupations are hazardous, few more so than agricultural labor. Farmers recognize that they must be diligent in their efforts to prevent nonfatal and fatal injuries.

According to the most recent statistics, farmers face a fatality rate of 25.1 for every 100,000 workers. In 2008, 456 farmers and farm workers lost their lives to work-related injuries. What's particularly risky about agricultural work is that it tends to be a family profession. That puts all members of the family at risk for injury. On average, 113 youth under the age of 20 die annually from farm-related injuries.

Tractor rollover injuries, inhalation of chemical pesticides and lacerations from farm equipment top the list of prime agriculture-related occupational injuries. With scores of different mechanical equipment and chemicals, not to mention lengthy exposure to the elements on a normal working day, the risk of injury is considerable.

There are key ways to prevent injuries on the farm. Here are a few considerations.

- * Proper training of new employees on the use required equipment is essential. If certification is needed, be sure employees have been trained and practice on equipment prior to independent use. Safety gear should be used at all times, when required. Workers should be careful to keep hair tied back to prevent entanglement in equipment.
- * Care should be used when working in the elements. Workers should be properly dressed for the temperature and conditions. Beverage breaks should be taken so that dehydration is not a risk.
- * Knowledge of chemical pesticides and fertilizers should be fully understood. Safety equipment, such as ventilators, eye guards and gloves, should be

used when handling caustic chemicals.

- * Machinery should be maintained according to OSHA and other federal guidelines. Equipment in good working order is less likely to cause injury.
- * Caution should always be used around livestock.
- * Operating equipment when impaired is a hazard in any profession. Alcohol and drug use do not mix in a farm setting. Individuals who seem intoxicated should not be allowed to work.
- * Children and adolescents should be carefully monitored around the farm. Because of their developing bodies, youngsters should not be allowed to do any activity that is overly strenuous and might tax growing bodies, such as heavy lifting.
- * There should be training in general first aid and CPR so that help can be given to an injured worker before a response team is able to make it to the location.



Tractor rollovers are a common cause of injury on farms. (MCT Photo)

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FSA offers new options for beginning farmers and ranchers

HURON — The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is working harder than ever to assist new farmers and ranchers. FSA State Executive Director Craig Schaunaman recently unveiled a new Land Contract Guarantee Program and several other tools designed to help beginning farmers and

ranchers build the foundation for a successful career in agriculture.

"New farmers face many challenges, like obtaining land for example," said Schaunaman. "FSA is going to provide new options to help them to work through this challenging start-up issue." Peak land values, tight commercial credit, minimal credit history, and less collateral make it difficult for new and smaller farmers in South Dakota to get a commercial business loan right now.

The Land Contract Guarantee Program provides a new approach for landowners willing to sell and finance a land purchase to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer. The program offers two options, one that guarantees up to three annual installment payments on the contract and one that guarantees 90% of the unpaid principal of the contract. Guarantees can be used in the purchase of land for up to \$500,000.

"South Dakota farmers represent all walks of life, as well as a wide variety of backgrounds and ages," notes Schaunaman. "This program will work well for beginning and minority growers in South Dakota, and we encourage producers to visit with us to determine if FSA can assist with their individual needs," he said.

Another new change to the agency's lending rules for new producers is to allow more flexibility in the minimum experience requirement. Under the new rule, FSA loan officers are now allowed to consider all prior farming experience, including on-the-job training and formal education when determining eligibility for FSA Farm Operating and Ownership Loans. To qualify for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Loan Program, applicants must have a minimum level of agricultural experience, but not more than 10 years operating a farm or ranch. Schaunaman also recommends that people considering a farming career visit the new USDA website www.start2farm.gov to learn more about loan programs available for beginning farmers and ranchers.

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