

NYFarmNetWorking

A newsletter for people working with the farm community

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FARMEDIC Trains Rescuers to Save Farmers' Lives

Davis E. Hill, Executive Director, FARMEDIC National Training Center

A 47-year-old farmer died after falling into a self-unloading forage wagon while feeding his cows. He apparently leaned over the wagon to check the amount of forage left inside when the eight-inch metal spines of the machine pulled him into it, penetrating his skull, upper body and arms. His son found him dead when he failed to come in for dinner.

In another accident, a farmer was making repairs on a silo unloader when he was overcome by deadly silo gas. His son and three members of the local ambulance crew all died attempting to rescue him.

Each year, over 1500 people die in farm-related accidents, and many thousands more are seriously injured. A growing number of these victims are children. Agriculture is now ranked as the most dangerous industry in the United States.

Farm accidents pose special problems to rescue personnel. Because farmers often work alone, in remote locations, significant time may pass after an accident occurs before rescuers can be alerted and are able to reach the scene. Since most farm accidents involve traumatic injuries, when rescuers do reach the scene, they must work with extreme urgency. Unfortunately, they may be hampered or even endangered by their unfamiliarity with farm structures, livestock, or agricultural equipment and chemicals. Moreover, tools that are effective in other types of rescue may not be adequate when dealing with farm accidents. The tools, for instance, used to remove a victim from the wreckage of an automobile accident are not powerful enough to cut through the hard steel of a farm vehicle.

In response to the frustration and concerns of rescue workers, the FARMEDIC program was developed in 1981, with support from the Farm Family Insurance division of New York Farm Bureau. FARMEDIC's 12-hour curriculum exposes rescuers to farming practices. Participants spend time on a farm, observing work and learning about farming equipment and structures, and the hazards they present both to the farmer and to rescue personnel. FARMEDIC participants also practice using special tools and techniques by "rescuing" mannequins from "accidents" on the farm.

The FARMEDIC curriculum is multi-disciplinary: each course involves fire, rescue, and EMS personnel. As

a result, the working relationship between the various local squads is often greatly improved by the FARMEDIC training. The course also emphasizes the importance of involving farmers and farm workers in rescue efforts; no training program can replace their expertise.

In 1985, the FARMEDIC National Training Center was created at Alfred State College in Alfred, NY. The main purpose of the Center is to train instructors who go back to their communities to train rescue personnel.

In 1992, FARMEDIC received a \$415,000 Rural Health Outreach Grant from the Department of Health and Human Services to assist other states in the development of FARMEDIC training programs. To date, FARMEDIC has trained over 5000 fire, rescue, and EMS personnel in 37 states and Canada.

For further information, contact Davis E, Hill, Executive Director, FARMEDIC National Training Center, Alfred State College, Alfred, NY 14802, 607-587-4734

Playing it Safe with Kids on the Farm

Eric Hallman, Cornell University

Every year between 175 and 300 children are killed in the U.S. while working or playing on the farm, and another 23,000 are seriously injured. New York State farms are no exception to this rule.

Why are children at risk on farms? Part of the answer lies within the structure of agriculture as an industry. Production agriculture often employs many individuals who are older or younger than people found in other industries: many below age 18 and many over age 62. Children on farms are often exposed to occupational and environmental hazards that are uniquely dangerous.

Children take on many roles around the farm, including working, accompanying adults, and playing. Agricultural-related injuries can occur during all of these facets of farm life.

Many children are injured while working

machinery. Injury scenarios can include tractor rollovers, falls from equipment or ladders, and entanglement in power take-off shafts and other machine components such as augers. Children are injured during livestock-related chores such as feeding animals or cleaning out livestock pens, when they may be kicked, bitten, or crushed by animals much larger than themselves.

Children have been injured while accompanying adults. Many children have been run over after falling off tractors on which they were extra riders. Too many children have been injured or killed by riding on trailed equipment and falling off, sometimes going underneath the equipment itself. Children riding in grain trucks and gravity-flow unloading wagons have been suffocated by flowing grain.

Children are injured while playing. The farmyard can seem like a giant playground just waiting to be explored and conquered. The painful reality is that kids are injured while playing in work areas or while watching someone else work. All-too-real examples include being backed over by trucks, tractors, and implements; falling off ladders or hay mows, or through floors; becoming entangled in augers, power takeoffs, or gutter cleaners while playing near them; ingesting milk pipeline cleaner, pesticides, and other harmful chemicals; falling into and drowning in manure pits, lagoons, wells, stock tanks, and ponds.

Children are the future of agriculture and are irreplaceable - let's protect our children and our future.

Farming Fatigue

Farming has always been a physically demanding occupation with a high potential for accidents. This is partly due to the complex machinery and unpredictable livestock. Another reason is the fatigue caused by long hours, demanding work, and time pressures.

Doctors report farmers' fatigue falls into three categories:

Physiological fatigue comes from biochemical reactions in healthy people that leave muscles exhausted. Lack of sleep, loud noises, poor working conditions, or extreme temperatures are typical causes.

Pathological fatigue, when chronic, is an early sign of an underlying illness, such as heart defect, hypertension, or anemia. In many diseases, such as diabetes, fatigue is often a clue.

Psychological fatigue, or "nervous" fatigue, is usually caused by mental factors: frustrations, difficult decisions, conflicts, delays or even boredom.

The following factors may account for fatigue among farmers.

Environmental Conditions

Work conditions such as noisy machinery, long periods of standing, poor ventilation in cabs, and inadequate lighting (common occurrences during planting and harvesting) increase strain and force farmers to use greater energy to concentrate on what they are doing.

Inadequate Sleep

Also common during planting and harvesting, inadequate sleep may be due to very long work hours, insomnia, or improper room temperature while sleeping which makes the body work harder to keep itself comfortable. Whatever the reason, the body is not given enough time to replenish the oxygen supply or rebuild muscle strength and the person awakes feeling entirely unrested.

Poor Food Habits

Farmers who skip meals or eat unbalanced meals fail to get the nutrition needed to build and maintain body tissue, produce energy, and conduct the many chemical functions of the body. They find that physical effort wears them out easily.

Emotional Upsets

Studies have demonstrated that a great majority of fatigue cases not due to illness or overwork are caused by emotional upset. Negative emotions - depression, guilt, frustration, resentment - bring on tensions that reduce the body's energy and produce weariness. Anger, fear, or rage send adrenaline throughout the body, affect breathing, and make the heart beat faster. After the adrenaline has stopped pumping the farmer is left exhausted.

Farming is a Hazardous Occupation

A distressing by-product of the increased use of modern machinery and structures in agriculture today is an increased rate of serious accidents occurring on the farm. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in this country. Although less than two percent of the nation's workforce is employed in agriculture, it has the highest number of deaths per 100,000 - higher than in construction or mining.

Other statistics include:

- the fatality rate in agriculture is 4 to 5 times higher than the national average for all occupations.
- an estimated 44 farm fatalities occur per 100,000 workers.
- there are 1,400 deaths and 140,000 disabling injuries per year in the US.

- although tractors account for only 7% of New York State's farm accidents, they cause 55% of the fatalities.
- children under the age of 15 are involved in 14% of the state's fatalities.
- 300 childhood deaths and an additional 23,000 childhood injuries occur yearly in the US.
- studies suggest that 1 out of 4 New York farms will experience a severe injury to a worker in any year.

Awareness of the problem is an important first step in dealing with these and other problems of agricultural accidents and illness.

Information for this article was provided by the National Safety Council and the NYS Rural Health and Safety Council, Riley-Robb Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850.

From Our Database

FarmNet calls 3/86 - 5/92	6046
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Ten Highest calling counties:

COUNTY	# Farm Callers	% of total calls
St. Lawrence	316	5.2%
Steuben	214	3.5%
Onondaga	212	3.5%
Madison	210	3.3%
Oneida	195	3.2%
Tompkins	187	3.1%
Jefferson	182	3.0%
Cortland	182	3.0%
Herkimer	178	2.9%
Otsego	174	2.9%
Total	2041	33.8%

Farmability Helps Farmers with Disabilities Keep Farming

Doreen Greenstein, Farmability Project

When a farm family member has a disability or chronic health condition that interferes with everyday tasks...

...call on **Farmability**. We are a Cooperative Extension project providing services to people with disabilities or chronic health conditions that limit their day-to-day activities. We serve men, women, and children who

live or work on farms, or who are involved in other agricultural or agri-business activities.

We can often help find funding for needed home modifications, such as ramps and wheelchair accessible bathrooms. We can share information about special farm equipment, such as lifts to get from wheelchair to tractor seat and tools to use with one hand.

Please think of us when you meet a family who needs disability-related help.

The following paragraphs about three families may help explain **Farmability** and what we do. For example, we are currently working with:

- a teenager who recently became paralyzed from the neck down. The family needs financial help to make the home wheelchair accessible. Because the state rehabilitation agency is unfamiliar with dairy farmers' financial record-keeping, the family was denied funding to which they were entitled. We are helping the family work their way through the bureaucratic system so they can get the rehabilitation services their son needs.
- an older woman with multiple sclerosis who is having trouble getting around her farmhouse. We have talked to her about strategies she can use to do her housekeeping tasks more easily. We have made suggestions about furniture, railings, and grab-bars so that her son, a carpenter, can make some accessibility-related changes in her kitchen and bedroom.
- a farmer who had a stroke and can now only use one hand. He was having trouble putting his work clothes on, so we made some simple clothing modifications that make it easier for him to put on his own boots and barn coat. We have talked about modifying his tractor so that he can operate the controls easily and safely. We are helping him work with a state vocational rehabilitation counselor so that he can get funding for special farming equipment.

Can you think of someone you work with who might be able to use our help? Call NY FarmNet, and their staff will refer you to us, or call us directly at 607-255-1143. Call us for general information, or if you would like us to come and talk to your staff about rural assistive technology and rehabilitation in rural settings.

Barn Fire Support Group Eases Loss by Sharing

The Herkimer County Farm Fire Support Group is made up of people who have all had a barn fire. For some, the fire was as recent as a few weeks ago, for some the fire was several months or years ago, and for one member the fire was 30 years ago.

Some of us lost our barns; others of us lost some or all of our cows. We've all experienced the same feelings: anger, helplessness, vulnerability, loss, grief. We've all had to pick up the pieces and go on with our lives. Some of us have built new barns, and some have chosen not to continue farming.

We've all shared our experiences and learned a lot from each other. We feel that we have a lot to share with others who are faced with the tragic loss from a barn fire: emotional and moral support, guidance in finding information for rebuilding, and sharing our mistakes and successes.

If someone you know has had a barn fire, we may be able to help, or perhaps you can help us.

Contact NY FarmNet (800-547-3276) or Farm Partners (800-343-7527) for more information.

Over the Fence

Here's a list of farm-related networking and support activities we've heard about. Please call and let us know what your group is doing!

- Schoharie Women's Group. Contact person - Eleanor Wages, Extension agent. 518-234-4303.
- Herkimer Barnfire Support Group. Contact person - Harry Robbins, Extension agent. 315-866-7920.
- Delaware County "Farmers' Night Out" group. Contact person - Glenice Branigan, NYCAMH. 1-800-343-7527.
- Cattaraugus County After Farming Support Group. Contact person - Gretta Archer. 716-358-5872. Not meeting during summer months.
- Retirement and Estate Planning for Farm Families. Sponsored by Cayuga County Cooperative Extension. June 22 and 29. Contact James Hilson for details and registration. 315-255-1183.

For Further reading.

- *Accident Facts*, National Safety Council
- *Farm Accident Rescue*, Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service Publication #10, April 1986.
- *First on the Scene*, Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service Publication #12, January 1989.
- *Breaking New Ground: A newsletter for farmers with physical disabilities*, Department of Agricultural Engineering, Purdue University, West LaFayette, Indiana, 47907.

*NY FarmNet Mission:
To provide farm families with a network of contacts and support services to help them develop skills for dealing with significant life challenges and transitions, through personalized education, confidential consulting and referral.*

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