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PRESS RELEASE

For More Information:

ELLEN G. DUYSEN

Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health

University of Nebraska Medical Center

College of Public Health, Room 3035

984388 Nebraska Medical Center

Omaha, NE 68198-4388

402.552.3394

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NATIONAL FARM SAFETY AND HEALTH WEEK 2023

An opportunity to expand and promote farm safety practices.

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According to the 2019 U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, the agricultural sector is still the most dangerous in America, with 573 fatalities, an equivalent of 23.1 deaths per 100,000 workers. Fall harvest time is not only one of the busiest times on the farm, it's also one of the most dangerous.

For that reason, the National Safety Council first designated the third week of September as National Farm Safety and Health Week in 1944 under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This annual promotion of farm safety has been proclaimed by each sitting U.S. President since then.

National Farm Safety and Health Week 2023 begins Monday, September 18 through Friday, September 22. This year's safety focus webinar topics include:

- Monday, September 18: Equipment and Rural Roadway Safety
- Tuesday, September 19: Health and Wellness
- Wednesday, September 20: Priority Populations
- Thursday, September 21: Confined Spaces
- Friday, September 22: Brain Health

All the National Farm Safety and Health Week webinars are free to viewers, however registration is required to watch them. Go to

<http://www.necasag.org/nationalfarmsafetyandhealthweek/> to register online.

Dan Neenan, MBA, Paramedic, and Director of the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) and Transportation, says this designated week gives farmers an

opportunity to focus on specific safety practices and for national media to prioritize farm safety articles and broadcasts.

“Our hope is that farmers and those who work in the ag industry view these stories and this information and pick up something they can use to stay safe in their work throughout the year,” Neenan says.

Concern for farm equipment and rural roadway safety peaks each year during harvest, since farmers are often on roadways traveling to and from fields and farmsteads and hauling grain. Neenan advises both farmers and the motoring public to be more aware than ever of roadway safety practices and the likelihood that they will encounter farm vehicles when they’re driving in a farming community.

“Before harvest begins, we encourage farmers to look over equipment to ensure that lighting is in working condition and equipment markings are visible and retroreflective,” Neenan says. “As the days grow shorter, the public should keep in mind that farm vehicles may be on the road when it’s dark. Being prepared to slow down and/or stop helps keep everyone safe on the road.”

Motorists are especially encouraged to not pass farm vehicles in a no-passing zone. Passing should only be done when oncoming traffic is clearly visible.

“Keep in mind, too, that a farm vehicle may be slowing down to make a left turn into a field or driveway,” Neenan says. “Attempts to pass in this situation can result in serious, even life-threatening, injuries.”

Neenan encourages farmers who take prescription medication to consider how these may affect their ability to stay alert and focused. Farmers need to make sure their doctors know they are operating heavy equipment and possibly working late into the night.

“For instance, heart medication is often taken at regular intervals throughout the day,” he says. “Take time to stay on that medication schedule even though the days get busy. The same is true of someone who’s a diabetic. Insulin won’t be effective if you don’t eat regularly. That may lead to a low blood sugar incident, which can affect hand/eye coordination and lead to a dangerous situation.”

Regardless of how pressed a farmer is for time, taking a break and making sure these kinds of details are handled is crucial to saving time and working safely.

In 2001, of the 453 fatalities in agriculture, 100 of the victims were under the age of 18. During Farm Safety Week, participants will have an opportunity to view a webinar that addresses some of the many dangers youth are exposed to as they grow up on the farm.

“There are huge pieces of equipment, confined spaces, livestock and other dangers that are all part of the farm environment,” Neenan says. “Being aware of the dangers and helping educate youth about the dangers could help avoid a tragic injury or fatality.”

Elderly persons are also at greater risk for injury on the farm than their younger counterparts.

“When I do training workshops, I ask how many people there know a farmer,” he says. “Nearly all the hands go up. I ask if they know a retired farmer. Again, nearly all the hands go up. When I ask how many know a retired farmer who stays off the farm, no hands go up. Farmers work well past retirement age. Since they’ve been working around loud equipment for years, their hearing

is often damaged. After bouncing around in skid steers, combines or tractors, their neck muscles become stiff. They can't turn as far to see things as a younger person can."

It's likely that a retired farmer who works on the farm will operate older equipment that they're familiar with, which doesn't have modern safety features. All these age-related changes and circumstances elevate the need for implementing safe work practices and maintaining added awareness of potential for injury in a farm environment.

A webinar about safely working in confined spaces will be presented Thursday, September 21. The webinar will feature lockout-tagout information and the crucial practice of safely entering a grain bin if it becomes a necessity.

"With covid, we all learned about how our environment impacts brain health," Neenan says. "The ag industry isn't immune to this. Farmers often work in isolation, with no means to vent their frustrations and anxieties. This may lead to brain health issues."

"One other currently important topic for farmers is making it easy for 911 responders to find you in the event of an accident or fire," Neenan says. "We encourage farmers to write the physical 911 address of farms and fields on paper and post the information in each farm tractor, combine, etc. That way, if emergency services are needed, the caller can immediately provide location information.

"Before harvest, farmers should make sure they have a fully stocked first aid kit in every farm vehicle and make sure fire extinguishers have been recharged and are ready in case of fire," he adds. "Just because you feel eight pounds of powder in that extinguisher, there may be no propellant to shoot it out. Take some time to think through what's necessary to work safely and be prepared."

Go to www.necasag.org for additional information and resources.

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