

2020

## PRESS RELEASE

### For More Information:

ELLEN G. DUYSSEN

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

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*By UNMC, Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, Omaha, NE*

### YOUTH ON THE FARM: RECOGNIZE THE RISKS

***Growing up on a farm has many benefits – and many risks.***

Statistics confirm that, just about every three days, a child is fatally injured on a U.S. agricultural worksite. In addition, about 33 children are seriously injured every day on farm worksites.

In 2020, in complying with pandemic guidelines, children have spent significantly more time on agricultural work sites than in the past.

Melissa Ploeckelman, Outreach Specialist at the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, says there are five top injury statistics related to agricultural youth injuries that can be found in their resource library at

<https://cultivatesafety.org/resourcesearch>.

“Agriculture is one of the most dangerous occupations in our nation,” Ploeckelman says. “Many ag work-related injuries or deaths associated with children are the result of children engaging in work that doesn’t match their developmental level. They may be at an age where it’s expected they can do a certain type of work, but they’re not tall enough, strong enough or don’t weigh enough to safely complete the task.”

A good example of this scenario is a youth who’s old enough to drive farm machinery but isn’t able to drive while looking back over their shoulder to view the implement behind them.

About 60% of injuries are to non-working youth, some of whom are visiting a farm.

“In many instances, the adult becomes distracted and the child wanders off into an unsafe environment,” Ploeckelman says.

The top three causes of child fatalities on the farm are farm machinery, vehicles such as trucks, and drowning. The drowning incidents include drowning in a manure pit or becoming entrapped in grain.

The top three non-fatal causes of child injury on the farm include falls and trips from single or multiple levels, animal related incidents and machinery or vehicles.

“There are five key safety strategies that can help prevent these types of injuries or fatalities,” Ploeckelman says. “Keeping kids away from tractors is an important practice. We know that 40% of accidental farm deaths of children under 15 involve tractors. Statistics show that four out of five farm children regularly ride along when tractors are used on the farm. We encourage families to break that tradition. It’s easier to bury a tradition than to bury a child.”

On an agricultural work site, hazards for children include skid steers, ATVs and PTO shafts. Children should never be left unsupervised around grain, livestock, gates, tires and similar hazards. When adults are working around these types of farm site scenarios, the safest practice is to keep children and youth away from the work site.

In selecting appropriate tasks for teens on an agricultural site, keep in mind that general teen characteristics include a lack of experience, tendency to be impulsive, a risk-taking attitude, desire to prove themselves and susceptibility to peer pressure.

“Teens are often reluctant to ask questions about an assigned task,” Ploeckelman says. “To help determine whether or not a young person is ready to complete an agricultural task, we encourage parents and employers to review the ‘Ag Youth Work Guidelines’ and ‘Hired Youth Guidelines’ at the website, [www.cultivatesafety.org/work](http://www.cultivatesafety.org/work). This information can help identify risks and hazards and help adults assess a youth’s abilities and assign jobs appropriate to youth and the skills needed for different types of tasks.”

Whatever type of work youth are involved in on the farm site, supervising adults should ensure the environment is as safe as possible. Proactive steps include eliminating/reducing distractions, slippery or uneven surfaces, and repetitive motion. Youth should be supplied with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as non-skid shoes, gloves, hearing protection, etc.

“Adults can help support safety by providing training for the work being done and ensure the youth is proficient in doing the task,” Ploeckelman says. “Modeling safe behaviors for youth is very important.”

Additional information on adult responsibilities and safety strategies are included in the “Ag Youth Work Guidelines.”

At [www.cultivatesafety.org](http://www.cultivatesafety.org), users will find resources designed to help create safe play areas and activities to help youth learn, grow and develop while they remain safe on the farm site. Resources include information related to working, playing, and preventing accidents on the farm. Online tools include how to establish daycare services in a rural area, a fact sheet identifying common causes of youth injury on the farm, and how to prevent farm related youth injuries.

“There are currently more than 253 online resources for parents and farm supervisors,” Ploeckelman says. “In the near future, we expect to have a total of 500 resources related to safely working on the farm. You’ll find specific safety topics, such as fencing for safe play and how to keep children away from hazards on the farm.”

Online resources include details regarding child labor regulations and links to state-specific regulations as well as online tools that enable farmers to inspect for safety issues and map hazards.

“We know youth raised on the farm generally have a great work ethic, have great opportunities to be outside for fresh air and sunshine and are often less likely to have allergies or asthma,” Ploeckelman says. “To make the most of these benefits, we want to do all we can to help parents raise children on the farm as safely as possible.”

Top injury prevention online resources include:

1. Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines - designed to assist farm parents and supervisors in assigning tasks based on worker ability, at [www.cultivatesafety.org/work](http://www.cultivatesafety.org/work)
2. Safe Play – resources for creating safe play areas on farms – [www.cultivatesafety.org/play](http://www.cultivatesafety.org/play)
3. Integrating Safety Into Agritourism – agritourism resources, guidelines, checklists and signs at [www.safeagritourism.org](http://www.safeagritourism.org)
4. Ag Injury News – allows users to search for injury reports using variables such as age, injury agent, year, etc. Resources for preventing similar injuries are linked to the reports at [www.aginjurynews.org](http://www.aginjurynews.org)
5. Childhood Agricultural Safety Network – information and resources from a coalition of organization working together to keep children safe on the farm at [www.cultivatesafety.org/casn](http://www.cultivatesafety.org/casn)
6. Cultivate Safety – this website is designed to provide access to agricultural safety information and resources for farmers, ranchers, supervisors and media at [www.cultivatesafety.org/resources](http://www.cultivatesafety.org/resources)

***Funding for this educational article comes from the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.***