During National Farm Safety & Health Week, the National Safety Council shines a spotlight on the health and safety issues of farming and ranching. "Farm Safely—Protect YOUr Investment" is the theme for 2008. It highlights the value of the safety and wellness of the agricultural producer, worker and their families and the importance of protecting hearing, lung function, vision, skin, the musculo-skeletal system and life itself.

Agriculture continues to rank as one of the most dangerous industries in the United States and globally. In 2007, there were 715 deaths and 80,000 disabling injuries attributed to agriculture in the U.S. Agriculture's death rate of 28 for every 100,000 workers is the highest of any U.S. industry, while mining ranks second and construction third.

"These numbers represent the people who work hard to produce the world's food," said Glen Hetzel, 2007-08 president of the National Institute for Farm Safety (NIFS). "The story behind the numbers serves as an important reminder of the continuing need to spread the agricultural safety education and awareness message." Sixty percent of farm injuries occur when working with large, unpredictable livestock; most other injuries occur while using machinery during crop production.

The experience in North Carolina mirrors the national story. People of every age and background involved in agriculture are at risk. This summer a Yadkin County family’s six-year-old daughter was run over by a bush-hog after falling off the tractor her father was driving. Her injuries were traumatic and disabling and will have a long-term impact on the family’s emotional and financial well-being. The knowledge that this incident was preventable makes the tragedy even more heart-wrenching. In recent years, numerous farmworkers have succumbed to heat stress while working long, strenuous hours in North Carolina’s heat and humidity. The hazard of transporting farm equipment on rural roads remains a serious concern of many NC farmers.

The good news is that efforts that get attention during Farm Safety and Health Week are supported year round by the NC Agromedicine Institute and its community partners. For example, a tractor provided by NC Agromedicine has been used by NC Cooperative Extension and the Ashe-Alleghany Kids Chapter for tractor roll-over demonstrations at Farm Safety Days for 4th graders and high school students in the northwestern part of the state for the past eleven years. A new training video developed by the NC Department of Labor’s Agricultural Safety and Health Bureau highlights equipment safety for Spanish-speaking tobacco farmworkers (see page 2). And the Institute’s AgriSafe-NC project is delivering occupational health screenings to farm families through the Tri-County Community Health Center at agricultural events in Johnston and surrounding counties.

The NC Agromedicine Institute joins Farm Safety 4 Just Kids and all of our community partners in reminding everyone to adhere to the following safety precautions to ensure a safe and abundant harvest:

- Conduct pre-season inspections, maintenance, and repairs to machinery several weeks before harvest.
- Make sure all guards, Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS), safety shields, seatbelts, and Slow Moving Vehicle emblems are in place.
- Keep children away from all farm machinery. Never allow children to ride on tractors or play in grain wagons or bins.
- Place NO RIDER decals on equipment and do not allow passengers on motorized farm vehicles.
- Always use the buddy system when working around grain. People can become entrapped in flowing grain within seconds.

A June 2008 report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed that North Carolina crop workers had the highest rates of heat-related deaths among all US workers, 3.9 per 100,000 for the period from 2003 – 2006. In addition, a 2006 NC Department of Labor survey found that 24% of 351 Gold Star Growers have experienced a heat-related illness themselves while farming.

Heat stress can affect anyone regardless of age or fitness, and the illness may not be realized until it is already advanced. However, heat-related illness and death are preventable. North Carolina Agromedicine Institute (NCAI) partners and others have focused on prevention of heat stress through training, outreach, and education. The NC Department of Labor (NCDOL) has visited every farm employing farmworkers to post bi-lingual posters and to talk to growers about work and weather conditions that produce heat illness and death in workers. Local weather stations warn outdoor workers about high heat index days. Health outreach workers from Student Action with Farmworkers and the NC Department of Health and Human Services’ Farmworker Health Program train farmworkers to prevent and recognize heat illness.

Most recently, the NCDOL in collaboration with NC Cooperative Extension, NC Grower’s Association, Meadowbrook Insurance Group, and the NCAI produced a DVD entitled “The Top 4 Farm Hazards: How to Avoid Them/Los Cuatro Peligros: Se Puede Evitarlos” (in Spanish with English sub-titles) to educate farmers and workers about preventing heat illness and operating hazardous equipment safely. Segments on forklift, tobacco harvester and tobacco baler safety demonstrate safe use and practical tips on avoiding problems. The DVD was filmed on location at Strickland Farms, Warren Farms and Jackson Farms. DVDs may be purchased from NCSU Department of Communication Services by calling 919-513-3255.


The Forest Guild Hosts Meeting to Address Southeast Migrant Forestry Worker Health

On August 21, 2008, the Forest Guild brought engaged stakeholders together near Atlanta, Georgia to discuss key barriers facing migrant forestry workers in the Southeast and to develop specific action strategies that the group can pursue over the next 12-24 months. Dr. Jim Hamilton of Haywood Community College in North Carolina and Nathan Wilson, Southeastern Regional Coordinator for the Forest Guild facilitated the meeting. Cintia Aguilar, Latino Programs Facilitator and Extension Specialist with NC State University and NC Cooperative Extension, attended the meeting as a representative of the NC Agromedicine Institute.

The Forest Guild practices and promotes ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry—“excellent forestry”—as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. As foresters, Guild members often assess the quality of forestry work based on how conditions look on the land. Yet, what often go unnoticed are the people who conduct the work and the conditions they work under.

In 2006, the Forest Guild conducted an analysis of conditions facing guest and undocumented forest workers in the Southeast US. Based on this assessment, the Guild is working to implement a plan of action with project partners in the Southeast to improve working conditions for migrant forest workers.

By bringing forestry workers, foresters, landowners, agencies, and support organizations together, the Guild plans to facilitate greater awareness of conditions facing forest workers and work to improve those conditions. Immediate action items will focus on educating landowners and employers about their responsibilities regarding forest workers, outreach to workers, and working with employers to identify incentives.
Behm Receives Prestigious American Society of Safety Engineers’ Practice Specialty Award

The American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), the largest and oldest professional safety organization, recently presented the distinguished Practice Specialty Safety Professional of the Year award to Michael Behm, PhD, CSP of East Carolina University (ECU) for the academics practice specialty. Awards in 16 practice specialty areas were presented to national and international ASSE award recipients at the annual ASSE Professional Development Conference’s Council on Practices and Standards awards luncheon in Las Vegas on July 15, 2008.

Dr. Behm is a faculty member of the NC Agromedicine Institute (NCAI) and has been an Assistant Professor in the Occupational Safety Program in the Department of Technology Systems at ECU since 2004. He received his PhD in Public Health from Oregon State University, his MS in Environmental Health from Temple University, and a BS in Occupational Safety and Hygiene Management from Millersville University in Pennsylvania; he is a Certified Safety Professional.

Dr. Behm’s research interests include design for construction safety, making a business case for occupational safety, safety management, corporate social responsibility and general occupational safety and health. His agromedicine interests include safety issues in the fishing industry. He was awarded a seed grant of $4,100 by the NCAI’s Southern Coastal Agromedicine Center for the project called “Feasibility Study of Crab Fishermen Occupational Safety” for the period May – September 2008.

Dr. Behm has long been very active in ASSE national and local chapter activities, including the Business of Safety Committee, the Technical Publications Advisory Committee, and the National Future Safety Leaders Conference Task Force. The Practice Specialty awards are given to candidates for their contributions to an ASSE practice specialty. A committee of peers chooses the candidates for each practice specialty. Practice Specialties include academics, construction, consultants, engineering, environmental, healthcare, industrial hygiene, international, management, mining, public sector, RM/I and transportation. For more information, visit www.asse.org.

The Answer is Sowing in the Wind

The 2008 Annual Conference of the National Institute for Farm Safety (NIFS) was held in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on June 22–26, 2008. The meeting was hosted by Pennsylvania State University, the North East Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, and the Pennsylvania Child Death Review Team. The theme “Sowing the Wind with Safety and Health” was adapted from a farm safety play conceived and written by Barry Kornhauser, a national award-winning playwright, and performed at the conference. NIFS is an organization dedicated to the professional development of agricultural safety and health professionals, providing national and international leadership in preventing agricultural injuries and illnesses to the agricultural community.

The 4-day meeting featured plenary and breakout sessions addressing injury prevention, farm health, farm safety, all terrain vehicle (ATV) safety, education and research, and model programs for farm safety presented by agricultural health and safety experts and practitioners from the United States and Canada. Additional sessions addressed the safety of youth, women, and Anabaptist farm populations. Two technical tours, Cherry Crest Farms Agritourism and Anabaptist (Amish) Farms, were offered.

Representatives of collaborative initiatives provided updates on the Childhood Agricultural Safety Network, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America, the National Academies of Science review of NIOSH agricultural programs, and NIOSH’s National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Sector Council.

A professional improvement session focused on discussing a draft NIFS white paper entitled “Operating Agricultural Equipment on Public Roads,” expected to be published later this fall. The white paper addresses one of twelve action priorities in the 2003 publication “National Land Grant Research and Extension Agenda for Agricultural Safety and Health;” see http://www.tmvc.iastate.edu/NCR197/. For more information contact Dr. Dennis Murphy at djm13@psu.edu or 814-865-7157.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!
The 2009 NIFS annual conference will be held June 13–18, 2009 in New Orleans. The North Carolina Agromedicine Institute and community partners will host the 2010 NIFS meeting at the Wilmington Hilton Riverside in Wilmington, NC on June 27–July 1, 2010.
CALENDAR


October 22, 2008: First NC Marine Biotechnology Symposium, Wrightsville Beach, NC.


November 13, 2008: NCAI Board of Directors & Board of Partners meetings, Raleigh, NC. http://www.ecu.edu/ncagromedicine/.


December 7-9, 2008: 73rd NC Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention, Greensboro, NC. http://www.ncfb.org/events/am/annualMeeting.cfm.