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Tips for safer farming

Tractor accidents, grain entrapment and injuries from ornerly livestock are just some of the dangers agricultural workers face every day. In fact, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health says agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the United States.

In 2016, the agricultural industry had a rate of 21.4 deaths per 100,000 workers, and each day agricultural workers experienced 100 non-fatal, lost-work-time injuries.

Agricultural dangers are not limited to North America. In Ireland, farm accidents have increased by 13 percent in the last five years and by 31 percent in the last decade, according to a national survey of farm accidents conducted by the Teagasc National Farm Survey. Furthermore, 97 percent of all farm accident victims required medical treatment.

Farms are dangerous places, and while carelessness can and does contribute to many incidents, accidents also take place during routine, seemingly safe activities. These farm safety guidelines can help lower the risk of injuries.

- Know farm equipment. Read and follow all instructions in the equipment operation manuals. In addition,

attend local farm safety workshops to learn more about specific equipment and products.

- Conduct routine safety checks. Look around buildings and grounds for obvious hazards, such as fire hazards and hazardous materials, including farm chemicals that are not stored correctly.

- Practice cleanliness. Maintain clean and neat work areas with tools stored properly and out of the way after use.

- Be mindful of your clothing and hair. Many accidents involve a power take-off system, or PTO, which is a common component of large rotary mowers, tractors and forage choppers. Clothing can easily get caught in an engaged but unguarded PTO stub. It's easy for laces or coversalls to become wrapped around a spinning stub shaft. The PTO driveline and other protrusion points also can be dangerous if people do not pay attention.

- Use rollover protection structures. ROPS can be used on tractors and other equipment to prevent injuries. In addition, wear seat belts and employ other safety equipment as advised.

- Avoid extra passengers. It can be tempting to take the kids for a spin, but do not allow additional passengers to ride on agricultural equip-



ment.

- Exercise caution when handling chemicals. Take extra precautions when handling any chemicals, including pesticides.

- Wear protective gear. Wear appropriate gear and equipment as outlined by NIOSH or the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Make sure the skin, feet, ears, eyes, and hands are protected at all times.

- Employ lock out/tag out control. This is a process

where one can work on equipment only after every energy source has been controlled, such as hydraulic, pneumatic, mechanical, and electrical, according to Rural Mutual Insurance Company. Turning off equipment and using certain controls or locks on devices can prevent equipment from restarting before it is safe to do so.

Farm safety should be a priority for owners, their families and employees so that agricultural injuries can be reduced.

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