

FARM SAFETY TRAINING FOR YOUTH

Agriculture can be an enjoyable and rewarding occupation. Many involved in farming, ranching, and other agricultural practices find great satisfaction and joy in a day well-spent. It is truly good fortune to wake up each morning excited to start a new day molding the land, raising crops and producing livestock. That is especially satisfying at the beginning of a new season with a fresh list of tasks. Additionally we often look forward to a new fiscal year in hopes of a more profitable economic outcome! Despite the all-too-often lacking budget so typical of agricultural ventures, we continue on for the sake of our children. Many of us have a proud heritage rooted deeply in agriculture. We love the work, the land, the animals, and the way of life it provides to us and our families.

However, a tragedy on the farm can put an abrupt halt to any joy or satisfaction that would normally accompany every-day life in an agricultural operation. We often become so absorbed in the work that needs to be done that we forget to be safety-minded. Devastating effects can accompany complacency, inexperience, or carelessness.

According to recent statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), agricultural work is one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S., with an average death rate of approximately 25 people per 100,000. Health and Safety Executive reports, less than 1.5% of the working population is employed in agriculture, and yet the sector is responsible for 15% to 20% of fatalities to workers each year.

Adults know we should be more careful about farm safety, but we are usually in a hurry and often take unwise chances. This is especially true when racing threatening storm clouds. Powerful farm equipment and unpredictable livestock make carelessness a recipe for tragedy. Regular safety meetings are important to teach employees about specific hazards in the work environment, but perhaps more importantly they serve as a reminder to be careful and cautious as we deal with the routine dangers ever-present in our operations.

Farms and ranches are great places for teaching youth the value of work. However, to a seemingly invincible teenager, caution is seldom a concern. As such, USU Extension and Cache County Farm Bureau, with cooperation from local agricultural equipment dealers, have organized another annual Agricultural Safety Training course. Our primary goals are to save lives, prevent injuries and reduce the economic losses associated with agricultural accidents.

The Hazardous Occupations Order, under the U.S. Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act, makes it unlawful to hire youth under the age of 16 to perform certain work activities. Successful completion of an approved training program by youth ages 14 or older allows them to legally operate certain farm machinery.

In addition to classroom instruction, participants will be required to pass both a written exam and a driving test. Employers and parents tell us that former participants definitely have an increased awareness of safety issues at the conclusion of the seminar.

The course will be taught April 15-16 at the ASTE Building (1498 North 800 East) in North Logan. We will meet from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Friday evening, and again from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday. The cost is \$10.00 per student and can be paid at the door. We do request a call to the Extension office (752-6263) however to pre-register and to help us know how many participants to plan for.

If we can save one life or prevent even one accident, the course will have been a success. We encourage all agricultural producers to enroll their children, grandchildren, and potential employees.