

## Farm Safety Classes for Hispanic Farm Workers

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(Project Completed while in Sanpete County)*

In conjunction with the Utah Farm Bureau, we taught a farm safety class for Hispanic farm workers. We taught the class entirely in Spanish. AJ Ferguson of the Farm Bureau along with myself were the major presenters. We also had help from Dr. David Frame (USU Extension - Turkey research), Pedro Ramirez (Local Farm Worker), Dr. Jose Munoz (Hispanic Medical Doctor from Richfield) and the Gunnison City Fire Department (who did an excellent presentation though we had to translate for them).



The topics that were covered included: safety features on the tractor; pesticide safety; fire extinguisher demonstration; electricity; safety on the highway; daily maintenance of equipment; livestock safety; biosecurity; taking care of your body; PTO demonstration; and some farm accident slides. This class was taught over two nights with 18 participants the first night and 19 the second. At the conclusion of the class we gave the participants a brief survey. They were asked questions to help us assess the impact of this course. The first six questions allowed the participants to respond with “Never,” “Sometimes,” “Usually” and “Always.” When asked if they were generally careful in their work before taking this course the average response was “Sometimes” to “Usually,” When asked if they would be careful in their work after taking the course all but one participant responded with “Always.” When asked if they used the proper safety equipment prior to taking the course the average response was between “Sometimes” and “Usually” when asked if they would use the proper safety equipment after completion of the class all but one responded with “Always.” When asked if they knew how to keep themselves safe in the many different aspects of farm work prior to the course the average response was between “Sometimes” and “Usually” when asked if they now understood how to keep themselves safe all but one answered with “Always.” When asked if they felt the class was something important for them to take every participant answered “Yes.”

We also asked which of the topics was most important. In answer to that question most of the topics were listed at least once and several participants said all the topics were important. The last question asked which topics were not important and did not need to be taught when we teach the class again. In answer to that last question most left it blank. The few that wrote anything said “none” and one participant said “nothing, everything was important, leave everything that was taught.”

We were very pleased with the turnout and the participation. We had a modest fee of \$5 per person which we used to cover the cost of materials. We gave each participant a

folder with safety information in Spanish and snacks. We provided chips and salsa along with some cookies and drinks. The class lasted about three hours each night.

At first I was a little nervous about the class. I have taught similar classes several times in English, but I was not sure my Spanish was up to par. I admit I did have to spend some time looking up new vocabulary to prepare myself for the presentations. However, we felt that this class would fill a big need in the community as more farm laborers are Hispanic and many do not speak any English. This also provided a service for the owners and managers, because many of them do not speak much Spanish. It was a service to them when they could have their workers trained in their native tongue. We also had great backing from the Farm Bureau both on a local and state level.

I think the biggest key to making this a success was keeping the costs low. It was also critical to convince the owners and managers that this was a benefit to them, because they were getting their workers trained which would hopefully keep them from getting hurt on the job. The time that we held the class was also important. We taught the course in November, so that we were off of Daylight Savings time so that we could start at about 6:30 and it was dark. This was significant because the participants are typically working during the daylight hours. We could still get them out of the class by 9:30 so that it was not too late and they could still get home at a reasonable time.

Advice I would give to others planning to do a program like this is to get local support and help. It made a big difference when one of the guys they all knew got up and helped teach the class. Contact AJ Ferguson, he covers the state and is very willing to come and do those kinds of trainings throughout the state. Keep it relaxed and have fun. AJ and I became good friends to the participant by the time we were done. Members of the Hispanic community are typically very fun-loving and happy. Use lots of visual aids to keep people involved. Contact local minority leaders, i.e. Hispanic Church leaders or others in the community who work with the Hispanic community, to help gain support. But most importantly, treat members of the Hispanic community like your friends and they will be your friends.