



Views from VanDeWalle

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National Farm Safety Week

It is no coincidence that National Farm Safety and Health week falls in September. September marks a busy time for farmers as harvest begins. The busier we get, the increased chance for accidents to occur happens. A couple weeks ago, I provided roadway safety tips for not only farmers, but the general public. This week, I've decided to share more tips for farmers to keep safe this harvest season.

According to the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety, the theme for National Farm Safety and Health Week 2020 is "Every Farmer Counts". The theme is to acknowledge, celebrate, and uplift America's farmers and ranchers who have encountered many challenges over the past couple of years, yet continue to work hard to provide the food, fiber, and fuel that we need. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are about 3.4 million agricultural producers in America, which is only about one percent of our population. These farmers and ranchers not only provide the essentials that we need, but they do wonderful things for their families and friends, their communities, and beyond. That is why "Every Farmer Counts" and now is the time to prioritize their safety and health.

Nebraska is fortunate to have the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health. UNMC works with the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health and Risto Rautiainen, PhD provides the following farm machinery hazard reminders:

- Protect grain augers to prevent cuts and laceration injuries.
- Protect Power Take-Off shafts with guards to avoid entanglements.
- Old tractors can have poor steps; if possible purchase improved steps to prevent slips and falls.
- Old tractors have poor seats which lead to muscle and joint pain. Replace them to protect your muscles and joints.
- Use good lighting and marking to increase visibility on the road.
- Use protected ladders or (preferably) stairways with guardrails in grain bins to reduce falls.
- Do not enter a bin when the sweep auger is running.
- Oil leaks from worn hydraulic lines can penetrate the skin and enter the blood stream.
- Sharing the road with all types of traffic can be a challenge, so be aware of your surroundings.
- Safety around powerlines should always be front of mind when operating large farm equipment.

Other tips from UNMC, include wearing N95 masks to protect your lungs from dust and wear hearing protection to protect your ears. Keep fire extinguishers maintained and easily accessible. Talk to your children or children who plan to visit the farm and make sure they are aware of the hazards of large equipment. Do not enter the grain bin alone and communicate with others where you are located.



One thing often not thought about is how stress and fatigue can cause accidents. One strategy to prevent clouded thinking is to take time between each task to THINK! Take 5 deep breathes before moving on; this helps your brain function better. During this unique time of uncertainty with low commodity prices, weather-related challenges and in a pandemic, you are an essential worker, not only to feed the country but most importantly to your family and friends. Be sure to take care of yourself this harvest season. Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy meals and utilize your network of family and friends and ask for help if needed.

For more tips on farm safety, go to UNMC's website at <https://unmc.edu/publichealth/cscash> or The National Education Center for Agricultural Safety's site at <https://www.necasag.org/>. Wishing you all a very successful and safe harvest!