

Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore County

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Tractor safety course for teens across Nebraska this summer

The Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health and Nebraska Extension have announced new plans for the tractor safety training course that was originally scheduled to be held at 12 sites across Nebraska this spring and summer. The new plans are designed to protect the health of the students and trainers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students will take the first day of the course online through the eXtension Foundation Campus website. After successfully completing the online course and testing, the required driving test will be offered at five locations across Nebraska July 27-31, 2020.

Teens 14 or 15 years of age who work on farms, or others who are interested in learning about safe farming practices, are encouraged to register for the Course. Anyone under age 14 is not eligible to take the class.

Federal law prohibits children under 16 years of age from using certain equipment on a farm unless their parents or legal guardians own the farm. However, certification received through the course grants an exemption to the law allowing 14- and 15-year-olds to drive a tractor and to do field work with certain mechanized equipment.

Susan Harris, University of Nebraska Extension Educator, reports that a common cause of agricultural-related injuries and deaths in Nebraska is overturned tractors and ATVs. She emphasized that this course is designed to train students how to avoid these incidents as well as many other hazards on the farm and ranch.

The online course will cover the required elements of the National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program, including quizzes which students must pass to attend the driving portion of training. Once a student is registered, they will be sent a training manual, course paperwork and a link to the online course.

The onsite driving training and exam will include a driving test and equipment operation and ATV safety lessons. Students must demonstrate competence in hitching and unhitching equipment and driving a tractor and trailer through a standardized course. Instructors will also offer education about safe behaviors and laws for ATVs, utility-task vehicles (UTVs), and other off-road vehicles (ORVs).

In order to protect students and trainers, the number of students on site will be limited to allow proper social distancing. All students and trainers will be required to wear a mask at all times during instruction and driving. Masks will be provided along with instructions for proper use. Equipment, steering wheels, control knobs, hitches, will be disinfected before and after each student completes their testing. Students who have had a fever or persistent cough within 14 days of testing will be required to reschedule their driving test. Additional driving tests may be added in August to accommodate students who are unable to attend the 5 scheduled trainings.



Instructors for the course are members of the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health: Aaron Yoder, Ellen Duysen; UNMC graduate student Alyssa Damke; and Nebraska Extension educators Troy Ingram, Randy Saner, and John Thomas.

Cost of the modified course is \$40 and includes educational materials, online learning link, and supplies. More information on the 2020 Tractor Safety Course can be found at kearney.unl.edu.

Driving dates, site locations, and site coordinator contact information is below:

- July 27 – Akrs Equipment, 49110 US Hwy 20 in O’Neill, contact Debra Walnofer, 402.336.2760, dwalnofer2@unl.edu
- July 28 – Legacy of the Plains Museum, 2930 Old Oregon Trail #8500 in Gering, contact Stacy Brown, 308.632.1480, sbrown7@unl.edu
- July 29 - West Central Research & Extension Center, 402 West State Farm Rd., North Platte, contact
- Randy Saner or Vicki Neidhardt 308.532.2683, randy.saner@unl.edu
- July 30 – Hall County Extension, 3180 W. Hwy 34, Grand Island, contact Nancy Usasz, 308.754.5422, nancy.usasz@unl.edu
- July 31 – Cass County Fairgrounds, 8420 144th St, Weeping Water, contact Sandy Prall, 402.267.2205, sprall2@unl.edu

For more information or to register, contact the appropriate Extension staff member above. Visit kearney.unl.edu for a registration form.

Hail Know: Resources To Remember This Growing Season

When hail strikes and growers have questions, Nebraska Extension has new resources to answer them at Hail Know located online at cropwatch.unl.edu/hailknow. Videos, infographics, and articles by a team of Extension experts in climate science, agronomy, engineering, agricultural technology, economics, and disaster education have been developed to build upon and expand Extension’s hail-related programs. Hail Know focuses on six key topics: Hail formation and storms; damage assessment; crop insurance and risk management; replanting considerations; managing a recovering crop; and cover crops.

In the aftermath of a hailstorm visit Hail Know for the answers and certainty, you need to make sound, research-based decisions to manage your crop. Hail Know is also on social media. Follow @HailKnowUNL on Twitter at twitter.com/HailKnowUNL and like Hail Know on Facebook at facebook.com/HailKnowUNL for all the latest information and updates.

Hail Know is a section of CropWatch.unl.edu, Nebraska Extension’s crop production and crop pest management website. The development of Hail Know was funded by a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Smith-Lever Special Needs Grant with matching funds from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The column was co-written with Ashley Mueller, Nebraska Extension Disaster Educator. While you cannot prevent hail, you can prepare for and respond quickly when dealing with hail damage to crops. Nebraska Extension is here to help you make informed, timely decisions. Know your crop, know your tech, know your bottom line.