

THE NIOSH AGRICULTURAL HEALTH PROMOTION SYSTEM PROGRAM IN WISCONSIN



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Wisconsin's program now has three primary goals: 1) Training for extension agents that improves the quality and timeliness of information they have on hand in county offices; 2) Epidemiologic Surveillance to increase understanding of health and hazards; and 3) Injury Control Intervention via an inspection and consultation program. The extension agent training is delivered through continuing and professional education sessions and is supplemented by a comprehensive resource guide in each county office. Each office also has an electronic mail information service linking agents with each other and with experts. These new features are intended to improve the technical content of informational exchanges between agents and their clients. The training improvements are being evaluated with a baseline and follow-up survey of agents that asks about their current activities, individual perceptions and needs in the farm health and safety area. Surveillance data will be collected from farmers on occupational injuries and illnesses in collaboration with the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service. Surveillance projects are planned for traumatic injuries, chronic musculoskeletal disorders, and diseases associated with adverse agricultural chemical exposures. The surveys will be administered to a representative probability of Wisconsin farmers and will pay special attention to quantifying exposures to machinery and equipment and other injury, ergonomic and chemical hazards. Research in other injury control fields indicates that conventional safety training may be of limited or questionable effectiveness for improving subsequent injury and illness experience. We are planning a farm safety inspection and consultation intervention program that will focus attention on easily remedied, yet common and important farm hazards. The on-site intervention will collect inspection data on hazards and then inform and persuade individual farm operators to make lowcost, one-time changes that will permanently improve safety and health. We will test the effectiveness of the inspection and consultation program in reducing hazards with follow-up inspections and investigate the influence of material incentives. As incentives, the pilot will include insurance refunds for documented reductions in risk. Wisconsin extension agents have also developed and successfully conducted brief safety inspections using volunteers and youth in two counties.

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