

Logging-Type Fatalities in the U.S. Production Agriculture Industry, 1980-1992

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SUMMARY. Logging activities such as felling trees for firewood and clearing farm land of trees, are conducted by many farmers throughout the country. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), National Traumatic Occupational Fatalities (NTOF) surveillance system, these logging-type practices resulted in 173 work-related “struck by falling object” deaths to farmers during the years 1980 through 1992, which represent 46% of all struck-by-falling-object deaths in the agricultural production industry during this 13-year time period. The majority of these deaths occurred in the midwestern (41%) and southern (46%) regions of the United States. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworth.com]

KEYWORDS. Fatalities, agriculture industry, logging activities, surveillance

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Logging is one of the most hazardous industries in the United States.^{1,2} Logging activities such as felling trees for firewood and clearing farm land of trees, are conducted by many farmers throughout the country. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), National Traumatic Occupational Fatalities (NTOF) surveillance system, these logging-type practices resulted in 173 work-related "struck by falling object" deaths to farmers during the years 1980 through 1992, which represent 46% of all such deaths in the agricultural production industry during this 13-year time period. Previous research on deaths in the logging industry showed that being struck by falling objects was the most common cause of death for loggers (48% of all logging deaths), and being struck by a felled tree was the most common event (68% of all falling object deaths).³ Similarly, 132 (76%) of such deaths in the agricultural production industry were due to being struck by felled trees. An additional 23 (13%) farm worker deaths were caused by being struck by falling limbs or snags. The majority of these deaths occurred in the midwestern (41%) and southern (46%) regions of the United States.

In an industry as inherently hazardous as logging, the training of workers is vital. Similarly, the recognition and abatement of hazards associated with cutting trees by farmers is paramount. Farmers should be aware of these hazards and the appropriate measures needed to reduce them. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration⁴ has implemented a regulation (29 CFR 1910.266) for the logging industry which addresses many of the hazards of logging and recommends prevention through proper training, hazard recognition, and personal protective equipment. These regulations, although not enforceable in farm-related work, provide useful information for the prevention of fatal and non-fatal incidents involving farmers.

NIOSH conducts investigations of fatal occupational injuries through the Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) project. Between October, 1991 and March, 1995, the FACE program investigated 16 fatal incidents that involved workers in the logging industry. Although no logging-type deaths have been investigated in the agricultural production industry, many of the same hazards exist for farmers as for loggers. Thus, the results and recommendations of the logging-related FACE investigations should also have application to logging-type activities conducted in the agricultural setting.

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4. 29 CFR 1910.266 Code of Federal Regulations, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Office of the Federal Register.

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Recent Advances

Edited by

Kelley J. Donham

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Jan A. Lay



Agricultural Health and Safety: Recent Advances

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CONTENTS

Introduction to the Proceedings of the Third NIOSH Agricultural Health and Safety Conference <i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i> <i>Risto Rautiainen, MS Agr Eng</i>	1
SECTION 1: PROGRAM REPORTS	
Rapporteur Report: Plenary Session <i>Stephen A. Olenchock, PhD</i>	7
Lessons Learned and Hypotheses Generated from the W. K. Kellogg Agricultural Safety and Health Initiative Cluster Evaluation <i>Robert E. Petrea, PhD</i>	11
Report on the University of Iowa International Workshop on Agricultural Health and Safety <i>Robin L. Ungar, MS</i> <i>Risto Rautiainen, MS Agr Eng</i> <i>Burton C. Kross, PhD, PE</i> <i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i> <i>James A. Merchant, MD, DrPH</i>	19
SECTION 2: AIRBORNE EXPOSURE, LUNG DISEASE, EXPOSURE ASSESSMENT	
Rapporteur Report: Airborne Exposure, Lung Disease, Exposure Assessment <i>John J. May, MD</i>	33

<p>Air Quality Assessments in the Vicinity of Swine Production Facilities</p>	<p>37</p>
<p><i>Stephen J. Reynolds, PhD, CIH</i> <i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i> <i>Jason Stookesberry, BS</i> <i>Peter S. Thorne, PhD</i> <i>Periasamy Subramanian, PhD</i> <i>Kendall Thu, PhD</i> <i>Paul Whitten, MS</i></p>	
<p>Strategies for Effective On-Farm Hazard Surveillance Visits</p>	<p>47</p>
<p><i>Ellen L. Abend, RN, MS</i> <i>Eric M. Hallman, MS</i></p>	
<p>The Keokuk County Rural Health Study: Preliminary Results of Environmental Exposure Assessments</p>	<p>55</p>
<p><i>Stephen J. Reynolds, PhD, CIH</i> <i>James A. Merchant, MD, DrPH</i> <i>Craig Zwerling, MD, PhD, MPH</i> <i>Ann M. Stromquist, PhD</i> <i>Leon F. Burmeister, PhD</i></p>	
<p>Respiratory Health and Allergy Among Young Farmers and Non-Farming Rural Males in Denmark: The <i>SUS</i> Study</p>	<p>63</p>
<p><i>Torben Sigsgaard, MD, PhD</i> <i>Charlotte Hjort, MD</i> <i>Øyvind Omland, MD</i> <i>Martin R. Miller, MD</i> <i>Ole Find Pedersen, DrMedSc</i></p>	
<p>Humoral Immune Responses to Pig Urinary Proteins and Respiratory Health of Pig Farmers</p>	<p>79</p>
<p><i>Gert Doekes, PhD</i> <i>Liesbeth Preller, PhD</i> <i>Roel Vermeulen, MS</i> <i>Jack Spithoven</i> <i>Dick Heederik, PhD</i></p>	

Potential Predictors of Airborne Concentrations of Aflatoxin B ₁	91
<i>Mustafa I. Selim, PhD</i>	
<i>Alex M. Juchems, MS</i>	
<i>William Pependorf, PhD, CIH</i>	
SECTION 3: TRAINING, INTERVENTION, COMMUNICATION	
Rapporteur Report: Intervention, Education and Communication	101
<i>Susanna Von Essen, MD</i>	
Agricultural Occupational Health Nurse Training and Certification: Addressing the Need for Occupational Health Professionals in Agricultural Environments	105
<i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i>	
<i>Julia K. Venzke, BA</i>	
Difficult Decisions: A Simulation That Illustrates Cost Effectiveness of Farm Safety Behaviors	117
<i>Henry P. Cole, EdD</i>	
<i>Pamela S. Kidd, RN, PhD</i>	
<i>Steven G. Isaacs, PhD</i>	
<i>Mark Parshall, RN, MSN</i>	
<i>Ted Scharf, PhD</i>	
Insurance Incentives for Safe Farms	125
<i>Susanna Von Essen, MD</i>	
<i>Kendall Thu, PhD</i>	
<i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i>	
Health and Safety in Australian Agriculture— Linking Research, Data and Action	129
<i>Lyn Fragar, MB, BS, MPH, FAFPHM,</i>	
<i>Dip Ag Ec</i>	
<i>Richard Coleman, BA</i>	

Agricultural Chemical Safety Awareness Program for Farm Wives and Children	139
<i>Barbara Pies, MS</i>	
<i>LaMar Grafft, MS</i>	
<i>Burton Kross, PhD, PE</i>	
<i>Linda Ogilvie, MS</i>	

SECTION 4: PESTICIDES, ERGONOMICS, PRIORITY ASSESSMENT

Rapporteur Report: Pesticides, Ergonomics, Priority Assessment	147
<i>Arthur L. Frank, MD, PhD</i>	

Change in Cholinesterase Levels and Self-Reported Symptoms Over Two Years	151
<i>Dean T. Stueland, MD</i>	
<i>Barbara J. Ault, RN</i>	
<i>Paul D. Gunderson, PhD</i>	

The Hazards of Organophosphates: UK Risk Assessments of Sheep Dips in Historical and Contemporary Context	157
<i>Andrew Watterson, PhD</i>	

Ergonomics of Cow Milking in Sweden	169
<i>Peter Lundqvist, PhD</i>	
<i>Marianne Stål, RPT, BSc</i>	
<i>Stefan Pinzke, BSc</i>	

SECTION 5: STRESS, MENTAL HEALTH, RISK ASSESSMENT, COMMUNITY HEALTH

Rapporteur Report: Mental Health	179
<i>Ann M. Stromquist, PhD</i>	

Stress as a Risk Factor for Agricultural Injuries: Comparative Data from the Iowa Farm Family Health and Hazard Survey (1994) and the Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll (1989)	181
<i>Kendall Thu, PhD</i> <i>Paul Lasley, PhD</i> <i>Paul Whitten, MS</i> <i>Mary Lewis, BA</i> <i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i> <i>Craig Zwerling, MD, PhD, MPH</i> <i>Robert Scarth, PhD</i>	
Influences on Farm Safety Practice in Eastern Washington	193
<i>Theresa J. Reis, PhD</i> <i>Pamela D. Elkind, PhD</i>	
Depression and Risk Factors Among Iowa Farmers	207
<i>Robert D. Scarth, PhD</i> <i>Craig Zwerling, MD, PhD, MPH</i> <i>Mary Q. Lewis, BA</i> <i>Leon F. Burmeister, PhD</i>	
Safety Practices Among Limited Resource Farmers in North Carolina	217
<i>Carey L. Ford, PhD</i> <i>Francis O. Walson, EdD</i> <i>John Paul Owens, MS</i>	
Health and Safety Issues Relating to Maine's Fishing Industry	223
<i>Allison P. Hawkes, MS, MD</i> <i>Joyce Roy, RN</i> <i>Norma Stacey-Scott, RN, BSN</i> <i>Joanne E. A. Joy</i> <i>Greg Bogdan, DrPH</i>	

Rural Counties with Large Meatpacking Firms: Implications
for Community Health 231

Judith C. Ruskin, MS
Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM

The Keokuk County Rural Health Study: Methodology
and Demographics 243

Ann M. Stromquist, PhD
James A. Merchant, MD, DrPH
Leon F. Burmeister, PhD
Craig Zwerling, MD, PhD, MPH
Stephen J. Reynolds, PhD

SECTION 6: INJURY, ENFORCEMENT, MACHINERY

Rapporteur Report: Injury Control 251

Robert A. Aherin, PhD

Agricultural Injuries and Illnesses in Texas: Using Bureau
of Labor Statistics Programs for Surveillance 257

Scott Richardson, BA
Shyla May-Lambert, MA

Occupational Agricultural Injury Surveillance
in California: Preliminary Results from the Nurses
Using Rural Sentinel Events (NURSE) Project 269

E. Lee Husting, PhD, MPH
Christine R. Geiser, PhD
Kathleen F. Summerill, MPH
Yolanda Cervantes, LVN
Ray Moltrum, BS
Carlos Ruiz
Ana Maria Osorio, MD, MPH

Agricultural Injuries in Norway 285

Jan Reiling, DrScient

Risk Factors for Injury in Rural Iowa: Preliminary Data from the Keokuk County Rural Health Study	295
<i>Craig Zwerling, MD, PhD, MPH</i> <i>James A. Merchant, MD, DrPH</i> <i>Stephen J. Reynolds, PhD</i> <i>Leon F. Burmeister, PhD</i> <i>Ann M. Stromquist, PhD</i>	
Strength Test for Pre-ROPS Tractor Axle Housings	303
<i>Zhifeng Li, BS</i> <i>Paul D. Ayers, PhD</i>	
ROPS Design for Pre-ROPS Tractors	309
<i>Paul D. Ayers, PhD</i>	
Non-Fatal Tractor Accidents and Their Prevention	313
<i>Juha Suutarinen, Lic Agr Eng</i>	
SECTION 7: CHILDREN	
Child Labor Issues in the International Setting	327
<i>Ana Maria Osorio, MD, MPH</i>	
Family Farm Seminars	335
<i>Shari Burgus, MEd</i>	
Brief Communication: A Pilot Case-Control Study of Injuries in Farm Children—Focus on Supervision Issues	343
<i>Susan M. Seville, MS</i> <i>Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM</i> <i>Dawn Roberts, PhD</i>	
SECTION 8: POSTER PRESENTATIONS	
A Design for Tailgate Safety Training in Ohio	363
<i>Deborah D. Reinhart, MS</i> <i>Thomas L. Bean, PhD</i> <i>N. L. McCaslin, PhD</i> <i>R. Nieto, PhD</i>	

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Community Oriented Primary Care and Agromedicine to Pre-Health Professions Students Planning Rural Practice	369
<i>Susanna Von Essen, MD</i> <i>Roxanna L. Fredrickson</i>	
Logging-Type Fatalities in the U.S. Production Agriculture Industry, 1980-1992	373
<i>Richard W. Braddee, BA</i> <i>John R. Myers, MSF</i>	
Effect of Dynamics on the Stability Index of Tractors	377
<i>Juhua Liu, MS</i> <i>Paul D. Ayers, PhD</i>	
Steps in Meeting the Needs of Kentucky's Migrant Farmworkers	381
<i>Kathryn J. Luchok, PhD</i> <i>Gilbert Rosenberg, MS</i>	
Farm Response: An Accident Preparedness Course for Farm Families	387
<i>Lori Lockinger, RN, BSN</i> <i>Tim Hillier, EMT-P</i> <i>Louise Hagel, BSN</i> <i>Yue Chen, MD, PhD</i> <i>Helen McDuffie, BSc, PhD</i> <i>James Dosman, MD</i>	
Communicating Safe Sun Practices to Farm Youth: A Model and Field Test of a Proposed Curriculum	391
<i>Donald R. Turk, MA</i> <i>Roxanne Parrott, PhD</i> <i>Mary Martin, MA</i> <i>Carol Steiner, RN, MN</i> <i>Dawn Lewis, BA</i>	

SECTION 9: APPENDIXES

Appendix I: List of Accepted Abstracts for the March 1996 Third Annual NIOSH Agricultural Health and Safety Conference	399
Appendix II: List of Participants for the March 1996 Third Annual NIOSH Agricultural Health and Safety Conference	409
Appendix III: List of Participants for the March 27-29, 1996 International Workshop on Agricultural Health and Safety	413
Index	417