

Final Progress Report

by

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2008 NIFS Conference: Sowing the Wind With Safety and Health

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Abstract: The National Institute for Farm Safety (NIFS) conducted its annual conference June 22nd through June 26th 2008 with the theme, “Sowing the Wind with Safety and Health” in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The specific objectives of the conference were to: a) exchange and disseminate information on agricultural injury and health prevention research and activities; b) provide opportunities for professional development through an environment conducive to networking, collaboration, and linkage-building; and c) exhibit leadership in identifying and addressing current agricultural safety and health issues. The conference program included three plenary sessions, two panel presentations, 40 technical paper presentations, 17 posters, seven educational displays and two safety-focused technical tours of area agricultural operations. A special presentation of “Sowing the Wind,” a farm safety play, developed utilizing the research-based “Theatre-In-Education” model was performed, and a ½ day hour professional development workshop on Agricultural Equipment on Public Roads was conducted.

Highlights/Significant Findings. The conference was attended by 130 professionals from the U.S. and Canada. Financial support of \$22,900 for the conference was provided by 11 industry and professional organizations, with two industry commodity organizations providing in-kind services valued at \$1,000.

A special presentation of “Sowing the Wind,” a farm safety play, developed utilizing the research-based “Theatre-In-Education” model was performed. It was written by Barry Kornhauser, a national award winning playwright. In practice, TIE is learning centered, participatory, and built upon real-life experiences. To that end, the playwright worked with students in a rural community familiar with agricultural issues and hazards as well as experts from Penn State Agricultural Safety and Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. The TIE process incorporated dialogue between performer and spectator, critically analyzing causes for the problem explored, with its goal the action and empowerment of its audiences. The play was extremely well-received by conference participants.

Another highlight was a special panel that addressed late-breaking national initiatives for agricultural safety and health. This included presentations by Dr. George Conway, Director, NIOSH AgFF sector, discussing recommendations from the National Academy of Science review of NIOSH’s agricultural safety and health program; Dr. Barbara Lee, Co-chair of NIOSH’s NORA AgFF Sector Council discussing the NORA draft strategic plan for the AgFF sector; and William Nelson, Chair of the new industry-lead Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA), discussing the purposes and goals of ASHCA.

Outcomes/Relevance/Impacts. A draft of a white paper, *Agricultural Equipment on Public Roads*, being developed by a USDA-CSREES North Central Research Committee, was presented at the Professional Development Workshop (PDW). The PDW is a separate event held in conjunction with the conference and requires separate registration. Forty participants reviewed sections of the draft document, broke into work groups to address gaps and shortcomings, and provided valuable feedback on recommendations for needed research and outreach involving farm equipment operating on public roads.

The “Sowing the Wind” farm safety play was scheduled for two additional performances; one at the American Farm Bureau Federation national conference and at another venue in Wisconsin.

Participants were able to learn of a unique collaborative model for building and sustaining state-wide agricultural safety and health research and outreach programs. The Pennsylvania Farm Safety and Occupational Act: A Model for Collaboration presentation focused on developing state-level partnerships among academia, state government, and industry. After a general presentation and explanation of the model, with real examples, breakout groups worked on a model plan for developing such partnerships in their own state.

Scientific Report.

Background. The National Institute for Farm Safety is an organization dedicated to the professional development of agricultural safety and health professionals, providing national and international leadership in preventing occupational injuries and illnesses to the agricultural community. NIFS provides opportunities for sharing information about research and intervention programs, improving skills and knowledge, networking and other supportive activities. The annual NIFS Professional Development Conference is the only annual conference attended by the majority of agricultural safety and health professionals from across the U.S., plus several from Canada, Australia and Europe. It is also an important venue for bringing together advocates for agricultural safety and health from diverse background such as public health, academics from colleges of agriculture, farm organizations, industry representatives and more.

Specific Aims. The long-range goal of NIFS is to play an active role in contributing to the reduction of agricultural injuries and fatalities. This is accomplished through the objectives of providing professional development of agricultural safety and health professionals and national and international leadership in agricultural safety and health. The annual conference is the main means of working towards the goal and objectives.

The specific objectives of the annual conference were to: a) exchange and disseminate information on agricultural injury and health prevention research and activities; b) provide opportunities for professional development through an environment conducive to networking, collaboration, and linkage-building; and c) exhibit leadership in identifying and addressing current agricultural safety and health issues.

Procedures. The four-day conference program included plenary sessions, panel presentations, concurrent technical paper sessions, research and educational poster, educational displays, safety-focused technical tours of area agricultural operations, and a professional development workshop. Technical paper and poster abstracts were collected prior to the conference. Following the conference, a CD was mailed to all participants and all members of NIFS.

Results. All three specific objectives of the conference were fully achieved through the following activities:

Plenary Sessions Titled:

- Sowing the Wind Farm Safety Play
- Pennsylvania Model for Collaboration
- North American Initiatives

Eight Concurrent Technical Paper Sessions

- Injury Prevention
- Farm Health
- Youth Safety
- Program Presentations
- Farm Safety
- ATV Safety
- Education and Research
- Women's Safety & Health

Four Issue Area Committee Meetings

- Tractor & Machinery
- Home, Farmstead & Leisure Time
- Traffic & Transportation
- Rural Occupational Health

Two Panel Presentations

- Farm Safety & Health for Amish/Anabaptist
- USDA CSREES Youth Farm Safety Program

Two Educational Tours

- Amish Farm Safety
- Cherry Crest Agritourism Safety & Health

Posters (17) and Educational Displays (7)

Professional Development Workshop – *Agricultural Equipment on Public Roads*

Evaluation. The only failure associated with the conference was not conducting an evaluation as originally planned. The day before the conference a computer hard drive crash destroyed the two evaluation forms – one for meeting logistics and one for scientific content -- that were to be used. With the other demands at hand, there simply wasn't time to recreate them or to find substitutes.