



Framing Agricultural Injuries: An Analytical and Anthropologic Review of Media Coverage in a Multi-State Region

Avery Uffelmann, Cheryl Beseler & Ellen Duysen

To cite this article: Avery Uffelmann, Cheryl Beseler & Ellen Duysen (26 May 2026): Framing Agricultural Injuries: An Analytical and Anthropologic Review of Media Coverage in a Multi-State Region, Journal of Agromedicine, DOI: [10.1080/1059924X.2026.2679275](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2026.2679275)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2026.2679275>



Published online: 26 May 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Framing Agricultural Injuries: An Analytical and Anthropologic Review of Media Coverage in a Multi-State Region

Avery Uffelmann^a, Cheryl Beseler ^b, and Ellen Duysen^b

^aOxford College, Emory College of Arts & Sciences, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA; ^bCollege of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE, USA

ABSTRACT

Objective: Agricultural injuries are frequently underreported and understudied, despite their significant impact on the individuals and communities affected. Local news media often serve as one of the few public-facing sources of information about such incidents, typically reporting on who was involved, what occurred, where and when the event happened, and occasionally, why it took place. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the demographic characteristics and narrative themes found in media reports of agricultural injuries across seven Midwestern states. Using anthropological approaches and perspectives, the research explored how media portrayals of these incidents may shape public perceptions of agricultural risk and influence safety-related behaviors within rural communities.

Methods: A database was developed using media reports of agricultural injuries collected by the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH) and Ag Injury News. The dataset included 154 news articles published between 2017 and 2024, documenting 200 agricultural injuries. Demographic and narrative content were analyzed to address the following research questions: (1) What types of messaging are emphasized in media headlines? (2) What forms of support for victims are mentioned in the articles? and (3) How is injury prevention addressed within the narratives?

Results: Analysis revealed a high incidence of roadway-related injuries and identified injury trends disproportionately affecting older and male agricultural workers. Nearly one-third of the articles analyzed referred to incidents as “accidents,” suggesting a potentially passive framing of preventable events. Prevention was mentioned in only 31.2% of articles; 24.7% referenced risky behaviors, while just 3.9% explicitly described prevention techniques. The data also offer insight into rural support systems, with references to financial or labor support, emotional support, and faith-based support. Furthermore, 63% of headlines conveyed no clear sentiment, and none of the reports included injuries involving immigrant workers.

Conclusion: These findings support recommendations for journalists to enhance both the quality and frequency of prevention messaging and to avoid using the term “accident” when describing preventable incidents. Additionally, health and safety professionals can use these insights, particularly the influence of community, faith, and economics to inform the development of culturally appropriate prevention strategies and interventions.

KEYWORDS

Agricultural injury;
anthropology;
cultural competence;
injury prevention;
news media

Introduction

The media plays a powerful role in shaping public opinion, behavior, and understanding of the world.¹ This influence can be strategically leveraged to improve public health outcomes and can also serve as a lens through which to examine prevailing cultural attitudes toward safety, both among media producers and the communities they cover. The language choices made by journalists and the details they choose to emphasize are particularly significant, as they reflect intentional framing and shape public perception of these incidents. Existing research has shown effective farm

safety interventions, such as rollover protective structures (ROPS), are seldom mentioned in media coverage, despite their proven success in preventing fatalities.² This gap highlights the need for a deeper examination of how agricultural injury prevention and support are portrayed in rural news media.

The “5 Ws” of journalism – who, what, when, where, and why – serve as a framework for reporting the key elements of an event. In the context of agricultural injury reporting, the “who,” “where,” and “when” offer demographic and situational data; the “what” typically describes the cause of

the incident; and the “why,” when included, provides crucial context that can inform readers about safe behaviors and potential prevention strategies. Recognizing how frequently and effectively media reports address the “why” is essential for enhancing public understanding of injury prevention and promoting a culture of safety.

Data and analyses on agricultural fatalities are available through government reporting systems, including the Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities (IIF) program. These data are collected and published annually via the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI).³ However, data on non-fatal agricultural injuries remain limited due to persistent surveillance challenges and significant underreporting.⁴ One approach to address this gap is to systematically review media reports from print, television, and social media sources. This method is particularly valuable in regions with consistent media coverage and has been successfully applied to study the burden of injuries within agricultural populations.^{5–7} Media reports of non-fatal agricultural injuries can provide insights into the frequency, causes, and costs of incidents, as well as demographic information such as age, gender, and location.

Agricultural injuries often have long-term effects on the physical and mental health of victims, as well as on their families and communities, due to chronic conditions, loss of work capacity, medical expenses, and other downstream consequences. Agricultural labor is frequently characterized as “3-D work” – dirty, dangerous, and demanding. These dangers are compounded by limited regulatory protections, including agriculture’s exemption from key provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, such as overtime pay and youth labor protections, as well as less stringent OSHA oversight for small farms.^{8,9} Identifying the root causes of agricultural injuries and improving prevention strategies is essential for safeguarding the health of agricultural workers and sustaining the nation’s food systems.

Anthropology offers valuable contributions to the field of agricultural health and safety by providing a nuanced understanding of the cultural, social, and structural factors that influence injury risks and prevention. Anthropological perspectives

help contextualize safety incidents by examining the motivations, lived experiences, and cultural practices of farmers and ranchers whose distinct occupational culture must not be overlooked in efforts to improve health outcomes. Through cultural relativism and ethnographic methods, anthropologists can explore farm communities holistically and identify contextually appropriate interventions that address both on-farm safety practices, and the way agricultural injuries are represented in the media.

Additionally, an anthropological lens can illuminate the roles of structural violence and “ethnographically invisible” forces, such as labor exploitation, immigration status, and regulatory exclusion, which disproportionately affect structurally vulnerable farmworker populations.¹⁰ A biosocial approach that accounts for the intersection of social structures and biological outcomes is particularly relevant in agricultural contexts, where occupational and domestic life are often intertwined. Understanding this overlap is critical for developing effective and culturally appropriate responses to improve farmworker health and safety.¹¹

The objective of this research was to conduct both quantitative and qualitative analyses to identify patterns in how agricultural injuries are portrayed in media coverage, specifically, what information is emphasized or omitted. The goal was to generate insights that could inform recommendations for improving the health and safety of agricultural workers, their families, and communities. This study examined three key areas: (1) the messaging conveyed in media headlines, (2) the types of support described for injury victims, and (3) the extent to which prevention strategies are discussed within the articles.

Methods

This research was deemed “Exempt” by the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s Institutional Review Board.

Research databases

A database of agricultural injuries in a seven-state Midwestern region (North Dakota, South Dakota,

Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas) was compiled using media reports maintained by the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH) and Ag Injury News.¹² Within the CS-CASH region, approximately 1,700 daily and non-daily newspapers, magazines, and trade journals are monitored. CS-CASH contracts an agricultural safety expert to select, extract, and code incidents from a news clipping service (Newz Group, Columbia, MO). For this study, researchers extracted the most recent injury incidents from these sources spanning 2017 to 2024, ensuring no duplicate reports between CS-CASH and Ag Injury News.

Inclusion criteria required an active link to the original media report to enable qualitative narrative analysis. When multiple individuals were involved in an incident, each injured person was included in the demographic analysis ($n = 200$), but qualitative analysis was conducted only once per incident ($n = 154$), using one representative news report per case. The database originating from Newz Group indicates that while other clippings may exist for the same incident, the selected source is considered representative. An agricultural safety expert selects the representative article to be placed in the database, considering the most thorough reporting available. Two incident reports originating from GoFundMe pages were included, as both contained information extracted from traditional media.

For this research, an agricultural injury was defined as any work-related or bystander injury occurring on a farm, ranch, or other agricultural operation, or involving agricultural equipment, livestock, or production activities, including injuries to those who were not involved in the agricultural operation, but were injured because of an agricultural pursuit. On-farm incidents are defined as injuries occurring on agricultural property, including farms and ranches. In contrast, off-farm incidents refer to injuries that occur on non-agricultural public or private property, such as highways, roadways, or city streets.

The severity of the incidents was categorized as minor (onsite treatment or no hospitalization or medical care sought out), moderate (non-life-threatening/non-life-altering hospitalizations), severe (life-threatening/life-altering hospitalizations; injuries described as “serious” or “significant”; amputations/

limb loss/injuries with long-term effects), or unspecified (unspecified injury), determined by the description in the report.

The analysis addressing the question, “What is highlighted in media headlines?” focused exclusively on headlines rather than the article body, underscoring the information journalists deem most newsworthy and what readers are most likely to encounter.

Statistical analysis

Demographic data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel (Microsoft 365 Apps for Enterprise, Version 2507, Build 19029.20080), while qualitative analysis of narrative content was conducted using QDA Miner Lite (Version 3.0.8, Provalis Research). Two coders independently analyzed the narratives, achieving a consensus rate of 98.7%.

Narrative codes were developed by identifying descriptors relevant to each research question within the article headline and text. These descriptors were then grouped into thematically similar categories to form a set of codes. The coding scheme was reviewed to ensure it captured all relevant content across the dataset, and the final codebook defined each theme based on its underlying descriptors.

Results

Demographics – injury incidents

Demographic data for individuals involved in agricultural injury incidents across a seven-state Midwestern region (2017–2024) are presented in [Table 1](#). The highest number of media-reported incidents occurred in Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri, while South Dakota had the fewest, with only four reports. Most injury victims were male and over the age of 45. In terms of injury severity, moderate injuries were the most frequently reported (35.5%), followed by severe (29.5%), with minor injuries being least commonly reported (10.5%). Roadway incidents were by far the most frequently reported incident type (58.5%), followed by tractor-related injuries (14%) and engulfment cases (7.5%). Most reported injuries occurred “off farm” (62.5%), as opposed to on-farm settings.

Table 1. Demographic and incident characteristics of agricultural injuries in a 7-state Midwestern region (2017–2024).

Gender	Count (%)	Age	Count (%)	Severity	Count (%)
Male	123 (61.5)	0–19	30 (15.0)	Minor	21 (10.5)
Female	48 (24.0)	20–45	44 (22.0)	Moderate	71 (35.5)
Unspecified	29 (14.5)	>46	68 (34.0)	Severe	59 (29.5)
Total	200	Unspecified	58 (29.0)	Unspecified	49 (24.5)
		Total	200	Total	200
Incident Type	Count (%)	Setting	Count (%)	State	Count (%)
Roadway	117 (58.5)	On Farm	73 (36.5)	IA	46 (23)
Tractor	28 (14)	Off Farm	125 (62.5)	KS	20 (10)
Engulfment	15 (7.5)	Unspecified	2 (1.0)	MN	48 (24)
Machinery	12 (6.0)	Total	200	MO	48 (24)
Fire/ Explosion	10 (5.0)			ND	9 (4.5)
ATV/UTV	4 (2.0)			NE	25 (12.5)
Fall	3 (1.5)			SD	4 (2)
Heat/Weather	3 (1.5)			Total	200
Crop-duster	2 (1.0)				
Livestock	2 (1.0)				
Unspecified	2 (1.0)				
Electrical	1 (0.5)				
Human Assault	1 (0.5)				
Total	200				

Qualitative analysis of media headlines

A thematic analysis of agricultural injury media headlines was conducted. Results of the coding and an example of each theme are shown in Table 2. Several recurring themes emerged, including references to “heroic” rescues, use of the term *accident* versus *incident*,

characterizations of victim suffering, descriptions of injury severity, assignment of blame, expressions of community support, notions of luck, mentions of prevention, and headlines with no apparent sentiment. Some headlines included more than one theme. The term *accident* appeared in 32.5% of headlines, reflecting

Table 2. Coded themes from agricultural injury media headlines and narrative text.

Theme	Count (%)	Example of Media Headline
Rescue	8 (5.2)	“Area man is rescued after being trapped inside a grain bin near Leaf Valley”
Accident	50 (32.5)	“Man Injured in Scotland County Tractor Rollover Accident ”
Suffer	3 (1.9)	“Man suffers burns in tractor fire”
Severity	28 (18.2)	“One person seriously injured in large farm, grass fire”
Accused	12 (7.8)	“Farm tractor pulls out in front of SUV ; driver ejected”
Community Support	9 (5.8)	“Friends, family, neighbors harvest soybeans for rural couple”
Luck	7 (4.5)	“Minnesota mom overcomes 1% chance of survival after being trampled by steer”
Preventative Measures	4 (2.6)	“Close call serves as a reminder to slow down ”
No Sentiment	97 (63)	“Minnesota boy 9 killed in farm accident girl 10 injured”
Theme Support	Count (%)	Example of Media Narrative
Financial/Labor	12 (7.8)	“Jim knew I was hurt and all the neighbors knew I was hurt, too,” ... “They all came to help me out. We had five combines, two grain carts and several grain trucks. They had it down in three hours. One-hundred-thirty acres in three hours. They were moving right along.”
Emotional/Moral	4 (2.6)	“As a show of support, one farming neighbor encouraged hanging snowflake ornaments or decorative snowflakes on their mailboxes in support of Nora and her family as she recovers. My heart just broke for them as we all know in the farming community that this could be any of us,” said Amy VonHoltum. “This just seemed like an indirect way to make a meaningful tribute of support.”
Faith	8 (5.2)	“I still say angels caught hold of that wheel and held it up,” Hedden said.”
Resources	1 (0.6)	“For the nearly 61 million individuals like my dad who live in a rural community, being able to receive the quality care they deserve in a setting that is comfortable to them is imperative for their recovery.”
Theme Prevention	Count (%)	Example of Media Narrative
Mention	38 (25)	“MSHP reports Barker was not wearing a safety device.”
Suggestions	6 (3.9)	“Slow down, don’t be in a hurry, and be aware of the risk areas.”
Economic	4 (2.6)	“Damage to the tractor is estimated at \$80,000, while the train engine sustained approximately \$5,000 in damage.”

a common framing of incidents as unpreventable. Most headlines (63%) lacked sentiment or contextual detail altogether. Injury severity was mentioned in 18.2% of cases. Accusatory language appeared in 7.8% of headlines, while 5.2% referenced heroic rescues. Community support following the incident was mentioned in 5.8% of headlines, and implications of “luck” or chance, regarding either the incident or recovery, were present in 4.5%. Preventive measures were rarely referenced (2.6%), and only 1.9% of headlines described the victim as having “suffered.”

Qualitative analysis – article narrative

Types of Support for Victims. Few articles addressed the support systems available to agricultural workers following injury (see Table 2). Among those that did, 7.8% referenced financial or labor assistance provided by the community, 5.2% mentioned reliance on faith-based support, and 2.6% described emotional or moral support from the community. Only one article cited the availability of a rural health resource as part of the post-injury support.

Prevention Messaging. The quality of prevention messaging within the article narratives was also evaluated (Table 2). Of the 154 articles analyzed, only 48 (31.2%) included any discussion of prevention. Thirty-eight articles referenced safe or risky behaviors, typically through standard language noting whether victims had used protective measures, such as seatbelts. However, only six articles went further by explicitly promoting safe behaviors through direct recommendations. Additionally, four articles used prevention messaging that appealed to readers through economic framing, such as references to the financial consequences of injury.

Discussion

This analysis of media reports on agricultural injuries across a seven-state Midwestern region revealed several key patterns in how these events are portrayed. Notably, many headlines and

articles lacked sentiment or contextual detail and frequently used the term “accident” to describe incidents that may have been preventable. While coverage occasionally highlighted community and faith-based support, critical elements such as prevention strategies, injury context, resources for rural health, and injuries among immigrant and migrant (im/migrant) workers were largely absent.

Demographic patterns

The gender discrepancy in injury reports, showing a higher number of male victims (61.5%), is consistent with the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture data, indicating 64% of agricultural producers are male.¹³ Additionally, male workers are more apt to perform hazardous tasks, which likely contributes to their higher injury rates.¹⁴

Older individuals (aged 46 and above) were disproportionately represented among the reported injuries, aligning with existing data that shows aging farmworkers experience higher rates of injury.¹⁴ This may also reflect both the demographic makeup of the agricultural workforce, with an average age of 58 years,¹⁵ and the physical risks associated with aging in a high-risk occupation.

Differences in the number of reports by state may be influenced by several factors. According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture,¹⁵ states including Missouri (87,887 farms), Iowa (86,911), and Minnesota (65,531) have significantly more farms than North Dakota (25,068) and South Dakota (28,299), which likely contributes to a higher volume of reported incidents. Additionally, states with larger metropolitan areas, such as Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri, benefit from broader media coverage, increasing the likelihood that agricultural injuries will be reported. In contrast, states with more sparsely populated rural regions may experience underreporting due to limited media presence. Many rural areas within the CS-CASH 7-state region are considered “news deserts”.¹⁶

The predominance of moderate and severe injuries in media coverage may reflect the type of incidents that garner public and journalistic interest. Although more severe cases tend to receive more attention, the inclusion of some minor injury reports suggests a degree of variability in what is

deemed newsworthy. The high number of roadway-related incidents, often categorized as “off-farm,” likely reflects the visibility and public nature of these events, especially when non-farm individuals are involved, which increases their likelihood of being reported. This report and others demonstrate there are still gaps in systematic agricultural injury surveillance.^{6,17}

Accident versus incident

The analysis of media headlines revealed a frequent use of the term “accident” to describe agricultural injuries. This choice of language is significant, as the word accident implies randomness and inevitability, failing to convey the preventable nature of many such incidents. This framing has been criticized by safety advocates who emphasize agricultural injuries often have identifiable causes and contributing factors and are therefore not unavoidable.¹⁸

This issue is particularly concerning in cases involving children, whose safety may depend on the actions and decisions of others. As highlighted in the report “Child Farm Injuries are Never ‘Accidents,’” the use of accident in such contexts “hampers efforts to alter unsafe environments or conditions in which children are present.”¹⁸ Notably, in this study, 15% of injury victims were under the age of 20, underscoring the importance of accurate and responsible language when reporting these events. Journalists are encouraged to avoid the term accident when reporting on preventable injuries and instead use more accurate descriptors such as incident, crash, rollover, or engulfment, which better communicate the nature and seriousness of the event.

Describing these incidents as matters of “luck” or misfortune further obscures their preventability and may mislead readers into viewing them as rare, chance occurrences, rather than situations in which precautions could make a difference.

Importance of context: the “why”

Providing context for an incident significantly enhances the depth and impact of a news report.¹⁹ Most media coverage of agricultural injuries focuses primarily on the “who,” “what,” “when,” and “where” of an event, often omitting the “why,” the crucial

background or circumstances leading up to the injury. This results in a “portrait-framed” narrative²⁰ where the story begins with the injury-causing event itself or, at most, a proximate decision such as not wearing a seatbelt or being under the influence of alcohol.

However, including the “why” can shift the reader’s understanding from passive observation to active engagement. When journalists provide context about what led to the incident, readers are more likely to empathize with those involved and recognize actionable steps they can take to avoid similar outcomes. Without this context, the take-away message may be limited to superficial advice, such as avoiding a specific road, rather than a deeper understanding of preventable risk factors.

The inclusion of “why” also offers valuable insights into safe or risky behaviors and helps health and safety professionals better understand the lived experiences and structural challenges faced by injured individuals. Research by Pickett et al.²¹ found associations between overt multiple risk-taking and injury among farm children. They concluded this appears to be a normative aspect of adolescent farm culture. From an anthropological perspective, this context can illuminate both visible and invisible social structures that shape health outcomes. These may include family dynamics, access to modern equipment with safety features, availability of healthcare services, mental or behavioral health concerns, and the economic instability inherent in farm work. While such factors may lie beyond the reach of individual preventive measures, they are essential for shaping effective treatment strategies and culturally appropriate safety messaging. Carefully crafted agricultural injury reporting by the media could help shape cultural norms, thereby improving overall safety.

Furthermore, this broader contextual understanding can enhance the training of health and safety professionals by integrating awareness of structural influences on health.²² It also underscores the important role anthropological tools and perspectives can play in improving health outcomes within agricultural communities.

Lack of sentiment in injury report headlines

The sentiment conveyed in headlines reflects what journalists choose to highlight and ultimately

shapes what most readers will see and internalize. The predominance of neutral or emotionless headlines in this analysis may reflect a journalistic emphasis on objectivity and factual reporting, where minimizing bias is prioritized. In many cases, headlines focused solely on the logistical aspects of an event, such as road closures, traffic disruptions, or basic demographic details, rather than the human impact of the injury. While neutrality in journalism is important, this practice can also strip stories of emotional resonance, particularly when applied inconsistently across different reports or populations, a concern that warrants further exploration.²³

For example, a headline such as *“Truck and Farm Equipment Accident Closes Portion of Highway 92”* communicates factual, unbiased information that may be useful to commuters but offers no insight into the human toll of the incident or whether it was preventable. This tension between factual objectivity and humanitarian storytelling presents a challenge for those seeking to use media as a platform for public health messaging and injury prevention advocacy.

At the same time, when sentiment is included in headlines, it can be a powerful tool for shaping reader perceptions. Severity of injury was noted in 18.2% of headlines, which may help convey the seriousness of the event and prompt reader sympathy. Similarly, references to the victim “suffering” evoke emotional engagement, as do mentions of community support or “rescues,” which may reframe the story with a more positive or hopeful angle. Although rare, the inclusion of prevention-related language in headlines signals to readers that such events are avoidable and that action can be taken, a narrative that could be more widely leveraged to promote safety behavior.

Accusatory language was also present in several headlines, often through references to citations or charges or through wording that assigned blame. For instance, the headline *“Woman Seriously Injured After Crashing into Farm Implement”* places responsibility on the woman; whereas a more neutral alternative, *“Woman Seriously Injured After Crash with Farm Implement”*, conveys the same information without implication of fault. This type of framing is significant. While attributing

responsibility can highlight the preventability of incidents and support behavioral change, it also has the potential to reduce empathy or stigmatize individuals, particularly if such language is used inconsistently across different demographic groups. This inconsistency could perpetuate underlying biases, an area that may benefit from further research and critical media analysis.

Inclusion of prevention messaging

Prevention messaging within agricultural injury reports was infrequent and, when present, was typically limited to brief, generic mentions. These messages often fail to engage the audience meaningfully or promote behavior change. Most references to prevention took the form of standard phrases noting safe or risky behaviors, such as: *“Bertels and her son were wearing a seatbelt but Korck was exempted due to driving a tractor”*, or *“The State Patrol report indicates alcohol was involved”*. Occasionally, a citation, charge, or arrest was noted, as in: *“She was cited for following too closely”*.

While such statements provide some indication of contributing factors, they stop short of offering clear or actionable guidance. Moreover, these mentions are largely confined to vehicular incidents, with little to no coverage of safety issues related to grain bins, machinery operation, fire hazards, or other common agricultural risks. This narrow focus limits the educational potential of these reports.

To enhance the impact of agricultural injury reporting, journalists should consider collaborating with agricultural safety professionals to incorporate more specific, informative, and relevant prevention messaging. In the absence of direct expert commentary, safety professionals could develop standardized, incident-specific safety messages for journalists to incorporate into their coverage. These should move beyond vague references to seatbelt use and offer practical guidance relevant to the full range of agricultural hazards.

An especially noteworthy, though rare, approach to prevention messaging was the inclusion of economic loss, which appeared in four articles. Highlighting the financial consequences

of agricultural injuries, such as direct medical costs, lost productivity, and labor replacement, may serve as a compelling motivator for farmers and ranchers to adopt safer practices.²⁴ This economic framing can resonate with an audience that is often deeply attuned to the financial sustainability of their operations.

This approach also points to the potential value of other audience-specific appeals. Whether for journalists or public health professionals, tailoring safety messaging to the values and priorities of agricultural communities is essential. In this context, economic impact represents a highly relevant entry point for promoting behavior change and enhancing the effectiveness of injury prevention efforts.

Community and faith-based support

In the text of many news articles, references to community support, whether through assisting with the harvest, offering financial help, or providing moral encouragement, highlight the essential role communal networks play in the lives of agricultural workers. As one interviewee stated, *“It takes a village. I mean that’s been the nature of the farm community as long as there’s been agriculture, big families chipping in, neighbors chipping in, everyone helping each other out. And that’s exactly how Matthew and Jen have built the farm over these six-plus years, by connecting with their community.”*

Similarly, expressions of faith were present, particularly in quotes from victims and their families, who often asked for prayers or attributed their survival to divine intervention. One family shared, *“We have felt the power of your prayers and ask that you continue to pray as we follow this long road to recovery.”*

These examples underscore the importance of understanding the cultural relevance of community and faith when developing public health responses to agricultural injuries. Health and safety professionals who acknowledge and integrate these cultural values into their clinical care or public health programming may foster greater trust and improve outcomes. Conversely, a lack of cultural competence in these areas can become a barrier to effective rural healthcare delivery.²⁵

Notably absent from most media coverage was discussion of formal rural health resources. This omission may reflect a lack of such services in rural areas or a general lack of awareness or access among community members. However, the one article that did highlight rural health resources praised a program that offered care in a familiar, culturally aligned setting, *“For the nearly 61 million individuals like my dad who live in a rural community, being able to receive the quality care they deserve in a setting that is comfortable to them is imperative for their recovery.”*

For agricultural safety professionals, whose core mission is to reduce hazardous exposures, communication and intervention design must go beyond standard training modules. Research shows traditional safety messaging is often ineffective unless it is adapted to align with the values, preferences, and lived experiences of specific farmworker populations.^{26,27} Interventions rooted in cultural understanding, such as those that involve local clergy, community-based organizations, or trusted local leaders, are more likely to be embraced and acted upon than one-size-fits-all strategies.^{8,28}

This is especially true among farmers, who are often characterized by resilience, self-reliance, and strong ties to tradition. These qualities, while admirable, can also present resistance to behavioral change unless interventions are perceived as respectful, relevant, and community-driven. Imposing regulations without this cultural consideration may even prove counterproductive, potentially threatening livelihoods and exacerbating mistrust.²⁹ As such, engaging agricultural communities directly in the design and implementation of safety efforts is essential to achieving meaningful and lasting change.

Who is missing from media Ag injury reports?

Notably, none of the media reports reviewed included injuries sustained by immigrant or migrant agricultural workers, despite this population comprising a significant, albeit difficult to quantify, portion of the agricultural workforce in the Midwest. This absence stands in contrast to prior research; for example, a 2013 study found nearly one in five migrant farmworkers in Nebraska reported experiencing an

occupational injury.³⁰ The lack of representation in media reporting raises important questions about visibility, reporting practices, and systemic underrepresentation of structurally vulnerable groups in public discourse. This issue should be explored in greater depth.

Conclusion

This study offers valuable insight into both the content and omissions within media coverage of agricultural injuries. As a discipline centered on the human experience, anthropological perspectives can emphasize the value of individual context in safety interventions. While many reports mistakenly use the term “*accident*” to describe preventable incidents, they also highlight the critical role of community and faith-based support in the aftermath of injury. However, the articles frequently lack meaningful prevention messaging, contextual background, emotional tone, and references to rural health resources. Notably, there were no reports of injuries involving immigrant or migrant farmworkers, underscoring a gap in representation that warrants further investigation. Additionally, variations in language used across different demographics raise questions about potential bias in reporting.

These findings can inform actionable recommendations: journalists should reduce the use of the term “*accident*” when referring to preventable events and incorporate clearer, more informative prevention messages. For health and safety professionals, the strong cultural significance of community and faith revealed in these reports offers important guidance for developing interventions that are culturally relevant and resonate with agricultural populations.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge Murray Madsen for his work collecting, reviewing, conducting the initial coding, and reporting on the newsclips that were used for this analysis.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The work was supported by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health [U54OH010162].

ORCID

Cheryl Beseler  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2135-3839>

References

1. Shea R, Chapman S. Media reports of rural health and safety: a review of articles published in The Land newspaper. *Aust J Rural Health*. 2001;9(5):206–208. doi: [10.1046/j.1440-1584.2001.00422.x](https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1584.2001.00422.x).
2. Perez-Sanz SB, Garcia K, Mejia P, et al. The news about rollover protective structures: findings from an analysis of news from Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. *Am J Ind Med*. 2023;66(7):558–560. doi: [10.1002/ajim.23490](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23490).
3. Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) - healthy people 2030 | odphp.Health.gov. <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/data-sources-and-methods/data-sources/census-fatal-occupational-injuries-cfoi>. Accessed August 6, 2025.
4. Patel K, Watanabe-Galloway S, Gofin R, Haynatzki G, Rautiainen R. Non-fatal agricultural injury surveillance in the United States: a review of national-level survey-based systems. *Am J Ind Med*. 2017;60(7):599–620. doi: [10.1002/ajim.22720](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.22720).
5. Weichelt B, Scott E, Burke R, et al. What about the rest of them? Fatal injuries related to production agriculture not captured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI). *J Agromed*. 2022;27(1):35–40. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2021.1956663](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2021.1956663).
6. Weichelt B, Heimonen T, Gorucu S, et al. Redesigning a sentinel surveillance system for collecting and disseminating near real-time agricultural injury reports: system usability study. *JMIR Form Res*. 2019;3(3):e13621. doi: [10.2196/13621](https://doi.org/10.2196/13621). Accessed August 2, 2019.
7. New-Aaron M, Semin J, Duysen EG, Madsen M, Musil K, Rautiainen RH. Comparison of agricultural injuries reported in the media and census of fatal occupational injuries. *J Agromed*. 2019;24(3):279–287. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2019.1593276](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2019.1593276).
8. Sorensen JA, Tinc PJ, Weil R, Drouillard D. Symbolic interactionism: a framework for understanding risk-taking behaviors in farm communities. *J Agromed*. 2017;22(1):26–35. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2016.1248306](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2016.1248306).
9. Bendixsen CG. The entanglements of agrarian ethics with agrarian risks and leveraging them in agricultural health safety. *J Agromed*. 2017;22(1):17–25. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2016.1248308](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2016.1248308).

10. Farmer P. An anthropology of structural violence. *Curr Anthropol*. 2004;45(3):305–325. doi: [10.1086/382250](https://doi.org/10.1086/382250).
11. Towards a Biosocial Approach to Occupational Safety and Health | Blogs | CDC. <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2019/03/08/biosocial-osh/>. March 8, 2019. Accessed June 11, 2025.
12. Welcome. AgInjuryNews. <https://aginjurynews.org/>. Accessed August 6, 2025.
13. Female producers. Census of Agriculture. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2024/Census22_HL_FemaleProducers.pdf. 2024. Accessed August 21, 2025.
14. Jadhav R, Achutan C, Haynatzki G, Rajaram S, Rautiainen R. Review and meta-analysis of emerging risk factors for agricultural injury. *J Agromed*. 2016;21(3):284–297. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2016.1179611](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2016.1179611).
15. USDA. National Agricultural Statistics Service Census of agriculture. Volume 1, Chapter 1: U.S. National Level Data; 2022. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/. Accessed August 20, 2025.
16. Northwestern Local News Initiative. Metzger Z. The state of local news. 2025. <https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/projects/state-of-local-news/2025/report/#:~:text=The%20Landscape%20of%20Local%20News,Initiative%20DatabaseCreated%20with%20Datawrapper>. Accessed February 12, 2026.
17. Weichelt BP, Gorucu S, Burke RR, Salzwedel MA, Murphy DJ, Lee BC. Agricultural youth injuries: an updated review of cases from U.S. news media reports, 2016–2021. *Front Public Health*. 2022;10:1045858. doi: [10.3389/fpubh.2022.1045858](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1045858).
18. Lee BC. Child farm injuries are never “accidents.” *J Agromed*. 2024;29(2):304–306. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2024.2311050](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2024.2311050).
19. Tong J. From content to context: a qualitative case study of factors influencing audience perception of the trustworthiness of COVID-19 data visualisations in UK newspaper coverage. *Journalism (Lond)*. 2023;25(7):1481–1499. doi: [10.1177/14648849231190725](https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231190725). PMID: PMC10375234.
20. Bonilla-Escobar FJ, Gutiérrez MI. Injuries are not accidents: towards a culture of prevention. *Colomb Med (Cali)*. 2014;45(3):132–135. doi: [10.25100/cm.v45i3.1462](https://doi.org/10.25100/cm.v45i3.1462). Accessed September 30, 2014.
21. Pickett W, Berg RL, Marlenga B. Social environments, risk-taking and injury in farm adolescents. *Inj Prev*. 2017;23(6):388–398. doi: [10.1136/injuryprev-2016-042075](https://doi.org/10.1136/injuryprev-2016-042075).
22. Bendixsen CG, Ramos AK, Holmes SM. Structural competency and agricultural health and safety: an opportunity to foster equity within agriculture. *J Agromed*. 2023;28(1):45–52. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2022.2148148](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2022.2148148).
23. Evans J, Heiberger S. Agricultural media coverage of farm safety: review of the literature. *J Agromed*. 2016;21(1):91–105. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2015.1106376](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2015.1106376).
24. Shutske J, Valenzuela MF, Versweyveld J. The business case for safety on the farm. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Farm Management; Division of Extension. <https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/articles/the-business-case-for-safety-on-the-farm/>. Accessed August 4, 2025.
25. Coombs NC, Campbell DG, Caringi J. A qualitative study of rural healthcare providers’ views of social, cultural, and programmatic barriers to healthcare access. *BMC Health Serv Res*. 2022;22(1):438. doi: [10.1186/s12913-022-07829-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-07829-2). Accessed April 2, 2022.
26. Klataske RT, Bendixsen CG. Cattle feedyard workers in rural Nebraska: safety, health, and precarity. *Great Plains Res*. 2022;32(2):159–176. doi: [10.1353/gpr.2022.0013](https://doi.org/10.1353/gpr.2022.0013). Accessed August 4, 2025.
27. Kim JS, Yoon SY, Cho SY, Kim SK, Chung IS, Shin HS. Effectiveness of participatory training for the promotion of work-related health and safety among Korean farmers. *Ind Health*. 2017;55(4):391–401. doi: [10.2486/indhealth.2017-0015](https://doi.org/10.2486/indhealth.2017-0015).
28. Fortun K. Anthropology in farm safety. *J Agromed*. 2017;22(1):14–16. doi: [10.1080/1059924X.2016.1254697](https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2016.1254697).
29. Gunn KM, Skaczkowski G, Dollman J, et al. Combining farmers’ preferences with evidence-based strategies to prevent and lower farmers’ distress: Co-design and acceptability testing of ifarmwell. *JMIR Hum Factors*. 2022;9(1):e27631. doi: [10.2196/27631](https://doi.org/10.2196/27631).
30. Ramos AK, Carlo G, Grant K, Trinidad N, Stress CA. Depression, and occupational injury among migrant farmworkers in Nebraska. *Saf (Basel)*. 2016;2(4):23. doi: [10.3390/safety2040023](https://doi.org/10.3390/safety2040023).