

Farm Families ALIVE & WELL



News from The Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health

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MRASH Conference: The Many Faces of Agriculture

by Gayle Olson, Assistant to the I-CASH Director

Today's agriculture includes a multitude of different business structures, crops, production methods and a diverse workforce. All of these have an impact on how those who work on the farm can best stay safe and healthy. In order to explore those impacts, the theme selected for the 2013 Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) Conference is *The Many Faces of Agriculture*.



The conference will be held at the Gateway Center Hotel and Conference Center in Ames, IA on November 19-20, 2013. The program is targeted to participants representing many different perspectives of agricultural safety and health including health care providers; agricultural safety and health, occupational health and environmental health professionals; educators; agricultural engineers; commodity group representatives; farmers; employers of migrant farm workers; media; and local, state and national policy makers.

More than 25 speakers will present educational sessions, and exhibits and posters of research/outreach projects will be on display. Participants will have the opportunity to tour non-traditional farming operations, including a dinner and poster session at Prairie Moon Winery. An optional International Symposium will explore agricultural health and safety issues around the world. This year a special parallel instructor training, designed to teach the basic First Responder training curriculum for incidents involving grain storage and handling facilities, will be offered.

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Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health: Building Collaborations and Empowering Communities for Health and Safety

by Kelley J. Donham, MS, DVM, DACVPM
I-CASH Director/ GPCAH Deputy Director

On October 2nd I will move to emeritus status, fulfilling 40 years of service on the faculty of the University of Iowa. A transition in leadership will take place for Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH), so this will be my last article as I-CASH Director in the Alive and Well Newsletter. It has been my pleasure and honor to serve as the Founding Director over the past 23 years. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on I-CASH, its history, its significance, and thoughts for the future.



Kelley J. Donham
MS, DVM, DACVPM

In 1985, I launched an idea, first introduced in Sweden and Finland, for a complete agricultural safety and health (ASH) service for farmers. In 1987, the legislature provided funds to establish an agricultural health and safety service pilot program. That program grew into the national nonprofit AgriSafe Network organization that we know today. From 1987 – 1990, the national policy process *Agriculture at Risk* was established, which provided a framework for both state and federal ASH programs. Facilitated by *Agriculture at Risk*, the 1990 Iowa legislature passed House File 2548, which created I-CASH as a joint venture between the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. I-CASH would cooperate with other public and private entities to support programs for farmer health, safety and rehabilitation. We then convened a state-wide consensus process involving relevant public and private stakeholders, setting rules to operate the Center.

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All of us at I-CASH and GPCAH extend a fond farewell to **Ellen Heywood** and **LaMar Grafft**. Ellen Heywood, Coordinator for the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, is retiring in October. LaMar Grafft, Rural Health and Safety Specialist for Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, is leaving to pursue other endeavors. We wish them well as they embark on new adventures.

Save the Date - **Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals** will be held **June 9-13, 2014** in Iowa City, Iowa. The training provides information and skills to enable the health care professional to function in the anticipation, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of occupational illnesses and injuries in the rural community. Visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ICASH for details.

Join communities across the country in celebrating **National Rural Health Day** on November 21st. For resources, information and a listing of special events visit www.iaruralhealth.org

The Rural Health Systems Analysis and Technical Assistance (RHSATA) project, funded by the Office of Rural Health Policy, has launched the new website RuralHealthValue.org. The RHSATA vision is to help create high performance rural health systems by spreading innovation and providing specific tools and resources that help translate knowledge into local action.

Agricultural Behavioral Health: What We Need to Know to Serve Agrarian Populations, a workshop sponsored by the Iowa Psychological Association, will be held October 4th at the Hotel at Kirkwood Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Visit www.iowapsychology.org for details.

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Conference sponsors include the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, the Central States Center for Agricultural Health and Safety, and the Heartland Center for Occupational Health and Safety.

Visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/events/MRASH/2013 for conference and registration information. Contact conference coordinator Gayle Olson by email at gayle-olson@uiowa.edu or phone 319/931-1351.

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exposure. Open tractors, loaders, and ATVs expose operators to more noise than similar equipment with enclosed cabs.

4. Use personal protective equipment. Since purchasing newer, quieter equipment is not always an option, use hearing protection when working in noisy settings. All hearing protection equipment has a "Noise Reduction Rating", or "NRR", usually between 15 and 30 decibels. Choose the hearing protection with the highest NRR value that is comfortable for you. Expandable foam ear plugs have the highest NRR and require proper insertion to be effective: compress by rolling them between fingers and thumb, insert into the ear, hold in place while they expand to fill the ear canal. Earmuffs that fit over the ears have slightly lower NRR but are very easy to use.

5. Mark "HIGH NOISE ZONE" anywhere there is risk of excessive noise exposure. Have earmuffs or earplugs accessible at each location and implement at the farm where noise levels are high enough to interfere with normal spoken communication. Keep an extra set in your truck. The less trouble hearing protection is to use, the more likely it will be used.

6. Limit daily exposure duration. Reducing the amount of time you are exposed to noise can limit its harmful effects. Visit <http://cph.uiowa.edu/gpcab/resources/hearing-loss.html> for a table of maximum durations of exposure to various levels of noise.

For more information on your health and safety while farming, check out <http://cph.uiowa.edu/gpcab/>.

Dr. Fred Gerr directs the GPCAH, housed in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health of the College of Public Health. He can be reached at 319/335-4212 (fred-gerr@uiowa.edu).

In 2002, a strategic planning process involving all partners was held to review procedures and make recommendations for the future. A *Statement of Principles* was adopted by the strategic planning group describing essential conduct of I-CASH, which includes the following actions: I-CASH listens to constituents; gathers and disseminates information supporting science-based intervention and education; facilitates, coordinates, collaborates, and enhances synergism among affiliates; fosters growth of existing organizations; develops new programs with compatible aims; and works toward trust, and inclusiveness.

Although I-CASH conducts education, research and service, the heart of the Center has been to expand efforts by our staff, support our partners, and encourage growth in ASH awareness. Through the years, many programs have emerged to join this effort such as Farm Safety for Just Kids, the AgriSafe Network, The Rural Health Clinic of Greater Johnson County, the Building Capacity Program, Certified Safe Farm, SHAUN, Agriwellness, Farm Safety Day Camps, National Education Center for Agricultural Safety, Proteus, and the Easter Seals Rural Solutions Program. The impact we have is the collective and coordinated actions of us all, magnifying our effects, creating a “thousand points of light” (as George H.W. Bush once stated, non-profit organizations and volunteers can be “a thousand points of light” to spread help and hope to others). I-CASH partners and affiliates create a thousand points of light in the universe of agricultural health and safety, *Helping Farmers Stay Alive and Well*.

I-CASH has been at the heart of my personal and professional mission of 40 years. I am gratified that our affiliates and stakeholders continue to work with the common goal, keeping our “eyes on the common prize.” Agriculture and its people are changing. The farming population is more diverse than ever, so new ideas and programs will need to be designed and implemented to meet the next generation of farmers. Now is the time to give a new leader the chance to take I-CASH to the next level.

I thank all of the I-CASH staff, all the partners and affiliates, and the farm population of Iowa for their service, dedication, and being those points of light in the dark sky. Thanks for all you do, have done, and will do.

Kelley Donham can be reached at 319/335-4190 (kelley-donham@uiowa.edu).

Agricultural Screening Equipment Available

Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) now has audiometry and pulmonary function equipment available for use at agricultural safety and health events. I-CASH partners and affiliates, as well as other public entities that have been trained to use the equipment, may check-out the equipment for one week at a time. The operator is responsible for proper care of equipment and accurate communication of results to those tested. A brief report on the testing site and population served will be required upon returning the equipment. Contact Ralph Altmaier 319/335-4229 or ralph-altmaier@uiowa.edu for details.



calendar

October 4

Agricultural Behavioral Health: What We Need to Know to Serve Agrarian Populations

Cedar Rapids, IA
www.iowapsychology.org

October 24-25

Agricultural Medicine Training

San Antonio, TX
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

November 2-6

American Public Health Association Annual Meeting

Boston, MA
www.apha.org

November 7-8

42nd Annual Iowa Governor's Safety & Health Conference

Cedar Rapids, IA
www.regionline.com/gskonference2013

November 14-16

23rd Annual Midwest Stream Farmworker Health Forum

South Padre Island, TX
www.ncfh.org

November 19-20

Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Forum

Ames, IA
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

November 21

Iowa Rural Health Association and Iowa Association of Rural Health Clinics 2013 Joint Fall Meeting

Celebrate Living in Iowa
Des Moines, IA
www.iaruralhealth.org

November 21

National Rural Health Day

<http://celebratepowerofrural.org>

January 22-23, 2014

Iowa Pork Congress

Des Moines, IA
www.iowaporkcongress.org

January 30-31

Agricultural Medicine Training

Greenville, NC
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Research to Practice

Protect Your Hearing This Harvest Season

Fred Gerr, MD, Director of the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health

One of the most common health problems among agricultural workers is hearing loss caused by work in noisy environments. Hazardous noise levels are produced by many kinds of agricultural equipment, including tractors, combines, grain handling equipment and dryers, livestock, feed grinders, and chain saws. Health specialists are especially concerned about noise-induced hearing loss because it is permanent and can dramatically affect the quality of life of the sufferer and his or her family members. The good news is that noise-induced hearing loss is completely preventable.

How can you tell if you are exposed to harmful levels of noise? Sound levels can be measured with sound level meters. While these units are expensive, there are now many smartphones apps that can provide an estimate of sound levels (www.asba.org/Publications/leader/2013/130501/App-titude-Get-Smart-About-Noise.htm). Still, you don't need special sound measuring equipment in order to start protecting your hearing right now. Instead, just follow these simple rules: If you are in a noisy location and have to raise your voice above a normal speaking voice in order to be heard by another person, the noise is too loud. Any noise that leaves you with ringing in the ears or a temporary reduction in your hearing ability is too loud. So, how can you protect your hearing? Take these steps:

1. When selecting new equipment, ask about sound levels and pick the options with lower decibel (quieter) ratings.
2. Perform routine equipment maintenance. Fixing mufflers on engines, lubricating bearings, and replacing worn parts will reduce noise levels as well as improve equipment operation.
3. Isolate yourself from noise. Working in equipment equipped with cabs or enclosures will reduce noise

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