

In Iowa's Interest: Focus on Safety and Health of Farm Families and Workers is Crucial

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Tens of thousands of Iowans are pushing to harvest huge quantities of food, feed, and energy in a short time. As we thank them for hard work and dedication this is also a key time to focus on farm safety and health. Time pressure, workloads, equipment breakdowns, weather, and stresses all add up. Life-altering and fatal injuries can happen in an instant.

Farm families and workers face many risks and hazards throughout the year in producing both crops and livestock. Just a few of the dangers include tractor rollovers, powerful, fast-moving machinery, electricity, grain bins, livestock, slips and falls, skin cancer, ATVs, and roadway collisions. Unique stresses and demands in farming can also create special needs for behavioral and mental health assistance.

Agriculture's human resources must be treasured, conserved, and protected no less than land, water, and natural resources. Farm safety and health have improved over the years, but the plain truth is that people in agriculture still suffer excessively, and unnecessarily, from injuries, illnesses, and death. We have to do more to heighten awareness, resolve, and action to prevent such losses. That is why I strongly support this year's national farm safety and health theme: "Safety Counts: Protecting What Matters."

Through increased attention and effort, farm families and workers have made significant progress in agricultural safety and health. Much credit also goes to the work and contributions of many people in agricultural businesses, private non-profit organizations, as well as educational and research institutions. All of this effort enhances safety and wellness on our nation's farms and ranches. Safe farming practices save lives. I am very proud of my work during my years in Congress to support and dedicate increased federal funding to farm safety and health.

Upon becoming chairman of the U.S. Senate subcommittee that funds health programs, I provided added funds to create a new, concentrated federal focus on agricultural safety and health at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. A big, early step in my initiative was the landmark 1991 Surgeon General's conference on agricultural safety and health held in Des Moines. Over the years, I have continued funding for this purpose, particularly to our nation's agricultural safety and health centers, such as the [Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health at the University of Iowa](#) and the [National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety](#). My appropriations subcommittee also supplies ongoing funding for agricultural safety grants through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also supports farm safety and health initiatives, especially for young people in agriculture, which I have proudly supported as a longstanding member of the Senate appropriations and agriculture committees. My support includes funding specifically for the [National Education Center for Agricultural Safety \(NECAS\)](#) at the Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta, [Farm Safety 4 Just Kids](#) in Urbandale, and [AgrAbility](#), which helps agricultural producers and workers having a wide range of physical or behavioral conditions.

Please be especially careful out there this fall and throughout the year. Safety on and around Iowa's farms requires extra care on everyone's part – including motorists and the general public. Fortunately, a lot of good people and organizations are working successfully to help make farms not only wonderful places to live and work, but also safer and healthier. I am proud to support these efforts and wish everyone a safe harvest!

For additional information on farm safety:

- Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA): <http://www.ashca.org/>;
- International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health (ISASH): <http://isash.org/>;
- Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health at the University of Iowa: <http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/>;
- Iowa State University Extension www.extension.iastate.edu/farmmanagement/safety/;
- AgriSafe Network: <http://www.agrisafe.org/>.