Media Article:

The Alabama Farm Safety Education Program

This program is coordinated and managed by Dr. Jesse LaPrade, Extension environmental and farm safety specialist, and supported by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and Auburn University.

According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health farming is and continues to remain one of the most hazardous occupations in the United States with 20.3 farm fatalities occurring annually for every 100,000 farm workers nationally. With an average of 60,000 farm workers currently in Alabama, these figures suggest an average of 12 farm worker fatalities in Alabama annually.

Seventy-five percent of all farm fatalities are the result of tractor and or tractor implement incidents. About 47 percent of all farm fatalities are the result of tractor overturn. Virtually all of these overturn incidents are preventable by using safety-approved rollover protection structures on all tractors and using the operator seat belt.

The first priority of the Alabama Farm Safety Education program is to address safe tractor operations and to provide the NIOSH statistics to farmers and farm workers. Injury statistics are also beneficial to farm workers to point out times of the year, body parts injured, and type of injury incidence that has occurred on southern farms for several different farm specialty areas, such as row crop farming, livestock production and nursery producers.

The second priority is to support youth farm safety education and that is accomplished in several ways:
1. Support for youth safety day camps coordinated by Progressive Farmer.
2. Youth education training material development and or assembly coordinated by Robert Ebert (for select counties).
3. Provide training for parents to design and build safe play areas for youth on their farm.
4. Provide guidance for parents to match youth with age and developmental skills to appropriate farm chores.
5. ATV training for youth.

Educational materials have been developed for other farm safety concerns, including the following:
1. Electrical safety considerations on the farm
2. Dealing with heat stress and heat stroke in farming operations
3. Tips on avoiding West Nile virus infection on Alabama farms
4. Eye protection for farm and nursery workers in Alabama
5. Hearing protection for agricultural workers
6. Working safely in dusty environments
7. Coping with and reducing slips, trips and falls on Alabama farms
8. Proper lifting and carrying technique for farm workers
9. The Alabama Farm Safety Management Plan

Call your local Extension office or LaPrade to learn more about farm safety and the programs and products available to you. LaPrade can be reached at (334) 844-5533 or (334) 707-9534, Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. until 4:45 p.m.