

Farm Safety Series

Farm Incidents Statistics Report: The United States and Alabama

The incidental death rate in agricultural enterprise ranks closely with other dangerous occupations, such as mining and construction. Agriculture, mining, and construction have the highest incidental death rates of the major industries. In 1996, agriculture showed 21 incident-related deaths per 100,000 farm workers, while mining had 24 deaths per 100,000 workers. Mining fatality rates have dropped some since 1996 while agricultural fatalities have remained about the same.

Farm workers comprise only about 3 percent of the American workforce but account for 10 percent of the fatal injuries.

Nonfatal Farm Incidents

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health estimates that there is one injury per five farms per year. These injuries are serious enough to require medical treatment and a time loss of at least 1 day. In a recent year, it was estimated that

200,000 work-related, nonfatal injuries occurred on farms. Sixty-five percent of these injuries involved the owner/proprietor/operator/partner and 35 percent involved hired farm workers.

Farm Fatalities and Injuries in Alabama

Eugene Simpson, Extension economist and professor in agricultural economics and rural sociology at Auburn University, reported that Alabama currently has approximately 57,000 workers employed on Alabama farms. From the NIOSH fatality rates shown above, that would translate to 12 fatalities per year on farms in Alabama. Statistics have not been compiled for actual numbers in Alabama before 2003, but statistics developed from a national newspaper clipping service shows that there were seven fatalities on Alabama farms in 2003, including youth and part-time workers. All but two of the reported fatalities in Alabama were tractor related: three tractor overturns, one highway

fatality involving transporting a tractor, and one tractor that went over a bluff. There were two separate all-terrain-vehicle fatalities involving youth.

There were four fatalities on Alabama farms or in the rural environment reported for 2004. Two were tractor incidents (one overturn and one involved the operator being thrown from the tractor when it hit a pile of dirt). Another was a run-over by a farm truck gathering hay after dark and one involved a tree top that fell from cleanup after Hurricane Ivan.

The USDA Farm Statistics Organization in Montgomery reported that there are 45,000 farms in Alabama. From numbers

shown above, it can be calculated that about 9,000 injuries occur on Alabama farms per year (20 percent). From a monetary perspective, the calculation of average lost work time and medical expenses of \$500 per injury incident, there is about a \$4.5 million Alabama agricultural injury loss each year. Farms with a 10 percent profit margin would have an average of \$5,000 in lost profit for each incident or \$45 million in lost profit each year for all injury incidents in Alabama.

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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