

Health and Safety

Agriculture is a Dangerous Business

In 1991, the agricultural industry recorded more fatalities per capita than either mining or construction. According to Bradley Rein of the USDA, this is because agricultural workers perform a wide variety of tasks and often only do them one only once or twice a year. Some of the most serious problems include:

1. **Tractor-related accidents.** Tractor roll-over and accidents in power take-off attachments take the lives of about 132 growers each year, and many more are injured.

2. **Respiratory hazards.** Pesticide inhalation is an obvious hazard, but one of the most common respiratory problems is organic dust which causes a variety of maladies including pneumonitis, bronchitis and asthma.

3. **Electrocution.** Farmers are notorious for making on-the-spot repairs but jury rigged electrical wiring often results in injury or death.

4. **Hearing loss.** Although working around mechanical equipment without proper ear protection is dangerous, many growers like to listen to equipment to make sure that it is operating properly.

What makes farm-related accidents even more serious is that they typically happen in remote locations which delays the response time for emergency medical assistance. All nurseries should have someone that is up-to-date on the latest emergency medical procedures. Farmedic, a non-profit corporation has developed a system to train workers how to properly respond to farm emergencies. The course includes classroom sessions, videos, and modular demonstrations. For information, contact:

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