

Farm Families ALIVE & WELL



Great
Plains
Center for
Agricultural
Health

News from The Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health

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Rural Health and Safety Clinic Hosts Breakfast

To provide the latest information on agricultural cancers in Iowa, Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) and the Rural Health and Safety Clinic of Greater Johnson County co-hosted a breakfast during National Farm Safety & Health Week. The event, held September 20th at the Johnson County Extension Building in Iowa City, featured a presentation by Dr. Charles Lynch M.D., Professor and Director of the Iowa Cancer Registry and the Director of the field component of the Agricultural Health Study. Dr. Lynch discussed agricultural cancer risks and prevention for rural Iowans. Shalome Tonelli, RN, MSN, Clinical Director of the Rural Health and Safety Clinic of Greater Johnson County also shared information on personal protective equipment (PPE).



The breakfast meeting featured a presentation by Dr. Charles Lynch on rural and agricultural cancer risks.

For more information on the Rural Health and Safety Clinic of Greater Johnson County contact Shalome Tonelli at johnsoncountyagclinic@gmail.com

Roadway Safety Continues to be Major Concern to Agricultural Producers

by Fred Gerr, MD

As readers of this Director's column know, the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health is committed to eliminating persistent threats to the safety and health of agricultural workers. One widely recognized and grimly recurrent threat to agricultural health and safety is that of collisions between agricultural equipment and motor vehicles on rural roads. Overall, crash rates on rural roads are about three times greater than urban roads, in part because safety features of urban roads are often not found on rural roadways. For example, rural roads often have undivided traffic lanes and are frequently unpaved. Rural roads also lack traffic controls common in more developed areas and have poor enforcement of speed.

In addition to differences in road design, the presence of both motor vehicles and large, slow moving farm equipment creates physical and speed differentials. Many crashes between farm equipment and passenger vehicles occur at dusk during harvest season and often involve the farm equipment being rear-ended or sideswiped by non-farm vehicles.

To better understand how these crashes occur and to develop effective prevention strategies, injury epidemiologist, Marizen Ramirez, PhD, is collecting information on every crash between a farm vehicle and a motor vehicle in nine Midwest states. Dr. Ramirez and her colleagues will be able to identify the role that vehicle type and condition, driver characteristics, and roadway properties play in increasing risk for injury resulting from such crashes.

Dr. Ramirez has already learned some important new facts about roadway crashes. First, crashes involving farm equipment is not just a rural problem. From 2005-2008, three in every 10 such crashes occurred in urban communities as farmers were moving goods around densely populated areas of the Midwest. Second, over 90% of these crashes involved collisions with passenger vehicles, while only 8% involved only farm equipment (e.g., a tractor rollover). Speed differential and increased traffic density are potential reasons for collisions



Fred Gerr, MD

(continued on page 2)

The **Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals** course will be held June 10-14, 2013 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. The course may be taken for three graduate credit hours from the U of I College of Public Health. Contact Kay Mohling at 319/335-4219 or kay-mohling@uiowa.edu for more information.

New Safety Guidelines for Two-tank Anhydrous Ammonia Wagons - Many dealers are now using multi-tank systems with two anhydrous ammonia tanks mounted onto a single wagon running gear. A new set of voluntary guidelines for plumbing multi-tank anhydrous ammonia systems has been recently developed by a coalition of state government, academia and industry representatives. The guidelines, including sketches of suggested plumbing configurations, can be viewed under the news section at www.agribiz.org. The guidelines are voluntary, but dealers and applicators with multiple-tank systems are encouraged to consider the recommendations as equipment is readied for the fall application season. For complete article visit www.extension.iastate.edu/article/new-safety-guidelines-developed-two-tank-anhydrous-ammonia-wagons

Worker Safety Training Available Online - The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is designed to protect employees on farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses from occupational exposures to agricultural pesticides. In Iowa, the regulation is enforced by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). The Pest Management and the Environment Program at Iowa State University provides training materials in partnership with IDALS. New WPS training materials are now available online. To learn more visit www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/WorkerProtect.html

National Rural Health Day is November 15, 2012. It's an opportunity to "Celebrate the Power of Rural" by honoring the community-minded spirit that prevails in rural America, recognize unique healthcare challenges that rural citizens face, and showcase efforts of rural healthcare providers, State Offices of Rural Health, and other rural stakeholders, to address those challenges. For more information visit <http://celebratepowerofrural.org>

between farm equipment and passenger vehicles. Finally, harvest season is an incredibly busy time for farmers, who are much more likely to use the roadways at this time. Ramirez's team found the greatest number of crashes – totaling 2,259 - occurred during harvest season compared with the planting (1,046 crashes) and growing (1,672 crashes) seasons.

Although much remains to be learned, there are steps that passenger vehicle drivers and operators of farm equipment can take now to improve safety. First, all drivers should be aware that farm vehicles rarely travel faster than 25 miles per hour. Drivers must slow down when they encounter farm equipment and keep their distance. Furthermore, to be as safe as possible, operators of farm equipment should:

- Avoid travelling on high-speed roadways
- Ensure proper operation of vehicle lights
- Make sure all slow moving vehicles have appropriate signage (slow moving vehicle marker sign), and replace emblems that are faded
- Use directionals to communicate intentions to other motorists
- Drive only while alert and without the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Only carry passengers in equipment designed for them
- Use tractors equipped with Roll Over Protective Structures (ROPS)
- Avoid driving farm equipment on the road when visibility is bad

You can find more information about rural roadway safety, including "TIPS cards" and an educational video at www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/programs/rural-roadway-safety-video-project.html. Should you have questions about roadway safety or want to ask questions of health and safety specialists, visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/ and click on the "Consult with an expert" link.

The staff of the Great Plains Center wishes you and your family a healthy and safe harvest season.

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).



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Facilitating Research to Practice at MRASH

The Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) Conference will be held November 14-16 at The Hotel at Kirkwood Center, in Cedar Rapids, IA.

The conference, hosted by Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety & Health, Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, Heartland Center for Occupational Health & Safety, NCERA 197, and Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, will provide updated information on agricultural and rural safety and health issues; this year one focus will be research to practice. Dr. Max Lum, NIOSH Distinguished Consultant in Communications and Research Translation, and Brad Husberg, Director of the NIOSH Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Safety and Health Program will provide the keynote, *Moving Research to Practice: The Tale of Two Strategies— It's the Best of Times, It's the Worst of Times*. This keynote will feature a description of the NIOSH Research to Practice (R2P) program and how new approaches in difficult times can assist our agricultural communities. Breakout sessions will focus on R2P examples from comprehensive farm interventions, to safe play areas for farm children. Confined space hazards and grain safety will also be addressed, highlighted by a field trip and demonstrations at nearby Amana Farms, Inc.



For conference information contact Gayle Olson at 319/931-1351, or visit <http://cph.uiowa.edu/icash/events/MRASH/2012/index.html>

Nationwide Rural Road Safety Project



Only 23 percent of the U.S. population live in rural areas, but there are significantly more crashes in rural areas than urban areas. In 2006, fatal crashes in rural areas accounted for 56% of all traffic fatalities nationwide. A variety of risk factors are associated with these increased numbers, such as increased urbanization in rural areas, no or narrow shoulders, slow moving vehicles, hills and curves, blind intersections, and loose surface material.

In order to help reduce the high incidences of traffic fatalities and collisions in rural areas, Nationwide Insurance, under the leadership of William Windsor, Associate Vice President of Safety, has graciously offered to fund a Rural Roadway Safety Campaign.

Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) was approached by Nationwide Insurance for assistance in developing a proposal using Nationwide's suggestions. I-CASH turned to the Rural Roadway Safety Committee. Dan Neenan with the National Education Center for Safety, Shari Burgus with Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, and Jan Goldsmith, traffic safety consultant, will manage, conduct, and evaluate the project, which provides funding to create radio PSA scripts, a rural road education packet, articles for ag-related magazines, and to develop "best practice" tip sheets for slow moving vehicles. Nationwide Insurance will also distribute SMV emblems and educational material to their customers. This project will provide education to farmers and all who travel on rural roads in an attempt to reduce rural roadway crashes.

For more information on the Rural Roadway Safety Campaign contact Shari Burgus at Sbari@fs4jk.org.

calendar

October 22-24
National Safety Council Congress and Expo
Orlando, FL
www.congress.nsc.org

October 25-27
Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals
Marshfield, WI
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

October 27 - 31
American Public Health Association Annual Meeting
San Francisco, CA
www.apha.org

October 28 - November 1
International Society of Exposure Science Meeting
Seattle, WA
www.isesweb.org

November 1-2
Iowa Governor's Safety and Health Annual Conference
Altoona, IA
www.active.com

November 8-10
American Agri-Women 2012 National Convention
Denver, CO
www.americanagriwomen.org

November 8-10
The 22nd Annual Midwest Stream Farmworker Health Forum
San Antonio, TX
www.ncfh.org

November 14-16
Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference (MRASH)
Cedar Rapids, IA
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

November 15
National Rural Health Day
www.celebratepowerofrural.org

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Research to Practice

Behavioral Health Services for Farmers Withering in Drought Too

by Michael Rosmann and Murray Madsen

Two-thirds of the US mainland remains in gut-wrenching drought. Drought-stressed farmers and ranchers face increasingly important and difficult decisions now, and as they plan for the years ahead. Such stressors can adversely impact their mental/behavioral health, and their family's.

A recently-released study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (Proc Natl Acad Sci USA. 2012 Aug 28; 13950-5. Epub 2012 Aug 13) concluded that, while uncertain why, the rising suicide rate...a serious behavioral health concern for farmers in Australia...was positively associated with worsening drought. Depression and substance abuse are also among the serious behavioral health concerns in US agriculture.

Behavioral health services for US producers, which have historically lagged in agriculture's tougher times, have developed into an empirically-validated practice model. That practice model is included in *Rural Healthy People 2010* and best practice compilations by the National Rural Health Association and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In addition, the current US Farm Bill incorporates the key components of the model: telephone hotlines and websites with referral counseling services. All are easily accessible, confidential, affordable, and appropriate for those engaged in agriculture. Unfortunately, this component of the current farm bill was not funded, and a new farm bill and funding opportunity have been delayed.

Like the land and crops suffering from a lack of water, resources for AgriWellness, Inc. partners and rural behavioral health services have withered in the current climate. Meanwhile, the number of calls to "helplines" are increasing. The AgriWellness, Inc. partners are very concerned and expect the demand for stress counseling and other forms of assistance, such as farm management workshops, will continue to grow.

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Murray Madsen is a consultant with the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health and can be reached at md.madsen@comcast.net.