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## **AG SAFETY S.T.A.T. – SAFE TACTICS FOR AG TODAY**

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THOUGHTS from the EDITOR – PROPOSED CHILD LABOR LAWS for YOUTH in AGRICULTURE

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### **THOUGHTS from the EDITOR**

#### **Dee Jepsen, State Safety Leader**

The comment period for the Department of Labor’s proposal to ban all youth under the age of 16 year, to work (for hire) on farms has ended. Thanks to many of you who shared articles within your own circles of the agricultural community. Numerous local, state, and national groups read the announcements and got involved in the public comment period. Few would doubt that this statute was in need of industry review after 40 years of implementation. The nature, size, and technology of agricultural workplaces has changed since 1970, warranting a review of the types of youth-operated machinery and equipment, youth working conditions, and the levels of training received prior to their employment.

As an agricultural safety education specialist, I have fielded many questions, as well as encouraged those who contacted me, to likewise submit their public comment so that broad representation would be considered by the DOL when making the final published rule. Within my own interaction with stakeholders and agriculturalists, I find there to be support for family farms and safety education. No one has contested the need for experience, education, and safety training; the primary concerns seem to exist with “from whom” and “how” these youth are trained, mentored, and supervised.

During the public comment period (September 2 – December 1, 2011) there was a tremendous outcry from the agricultural as well as the non-agricultural community in response to the proposed changes. Over 10,000 responses were logged into the system. While some found the ruling absurd, others admitted this legislation was highly needed. While some spent a great deal of time researching the intent of the legislation, some provided knee-jerk reactions.

Nonetheless, the discussion over youth labor and the well being of the young farm worker is appealing to a professional that has worked nearly 20 years in agricultural safety education. The awareness created through the DOL proposed rule has opened many windows for discussion. I can’t remember an issue this heavily discussed in large and small circles. Local coffee shops, feed mills, church group meetings, and neighborhood chats have fueled many people to seek out the proposed rules and read for themselves the changes proposed to child labor laws. High school youth are engaged in conversations posed around these issues in their classrooms and are learning new legal and occupational vocabulary to take home to discuss around their dinner table. Agribusiness and family farm employers are seeking additional information—perhaps realizing for the first time, or possibly re-educating themselves about the current legislation for youth employment. Large corporations, lobby groups, farm organizations, and commodity groups have spent countless hours reading the proposed changes, listening to concerned members, and responding to the ruling within the context of their representative body.

I do not believe the safety and health concerns for youth farm labor has been resolved in either the proposed DOL ruling or in the plethora of public comments. While no one can predict the direction this ruling will take until after the first of the year – I do expect changes in the way we employ and train youth for agricultural jobs. As many of you know me personally, you know:

- I am a strong supporter of the family farm. I understand the dynamics that occur and the opportunities given to young workers to ‘learn as they earn’.

- I am also a safety professional and outreach educator. I see value in training programs that increase awareness of hazards and prevent injuries.
- I am a supporter of the Bloom's Taxonomy model for education. This hands-on and applied teaching approach has proven effective in the cooperative extension and agricultural education classrooms, as well as on farms. Utilizing education within a public policy structure is a valid approach to reduce agricultural injuries in youth populations.

The discussion and momentum has been started. I will continue to share the results and directions this policy takes.

## **SAFETY STAT of the MONTH: CHRISTMAS TREE FIRES**

According to the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 240 home fires that started with Christmas trees per year.

Christmas tree fires in the U.S. cause an average of 13 deaths, 27 injuries, and \$16.7 million in direct property damage annually.

For additional information and a video demonstration of a Christmas tree fire see:

<http://www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=296&URL=Safety%20Information/For%20consumers/Holidays/Christmas%20tree%20fires>

## **INJURY PREVENTION – SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS**

### **Kent McGuire – Ohio AgrAbility Program Coordinator**

Several types of walking and working surfaces are on farms and farmers may encounter any or all types of surfaces throughout the workday. Farmers have an increased risk of injury from a trip, slip, or fall because of the variety of surfaces they encounter on a regular basis. Areas which have a greater risk for these types of injuries include: sloped or uneven terrain, feed lots, areas that are washed down on a daily basis, and equipment steps, ladders or platforms. Simple guidelines to reduce the risk of slip, trip and fall injuries include:

- Utilize handrails or grab bars in areas where there are stairs or changes in elevation.
- Use 3 points of contact when mounting or dismounting equipment (1 hand / 2 feet) or (2 hands / 1 foot).
- In wet or icy conditions, take smaller steps and try to ensure your torso stays balanced over your feet.
- Use slip resistant matting or provide textured surfaces in potentially wet areas.
- Maintain good housekeeping in livestock barns and work areas, by removing manure and keeping surfaces clean and dry.
- Minimize distractions to remain alert to hazards and avoid carrying bulky items that block your view.
- Remove obstructions from travel areas, such as extension cords, power cords, hoses, boxes, or tools.
- Stay alert to items projecting from buildings or equipment.
- Repair uneven / warped flooring, protruding nails, splinters and loose boards, or cracks in concrete which can create an uneven walking surface.
- Create smooth transitions from loose gravel to other surfaces.

For more information about the Ohio AgrAbility Program visit [agrability.osu.edu](http://agrability.osu.edu) or contact Kent McGuire, OSU Agricultural Safety & Health, at [mcguire.225@osu.edu](mailto:mcguire.225@osu.edu) or 614-292-0588.

## **Emergency Management Tip of the Month – HOLIDAY SAFETY**

### **Aletha I. Reshan, Emergency Management Planning and Education Program Coordinator**

The holiday season is here! In this time of fun and celebrations it is easy to get caught up in the excitement and perhaps not always be thinking of safety. These basic tips can help keep our holidays safe so we can enjoy this season of fun and excitement with family and friends!

**Plan ahead.** This will save time, money, aggravation, and lives! Planning ahead entails everything from ensuring there is a designated driver to ensuring your vehicle has proper roadside emergency items.

**Ensure vehicles have been winterized.** This includes:

- Tires having adequate tread and proper inflation.
- Battery having adequate charge.
- Full antifreeze and windshield washer fluid levels.
- Making sure spark plugs, wiring, belts, hoses, filters, and other mechanisms are in good working order.
- Keep fuel tank as full as possible.

**Have emergency items in vehicle.** This includes:

- Phone charger
- Map
- Ice scraper, snow brush
- Spare tire
- Flashlight

**Practice home safety.**

- Ensure smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detectors are installed, have fresh batteries, and are in otherwise good working condition.
- Use holiday decoration items that are in good working order. Do not use frayed extension cords or lights that have broken bulbs.
- Connect no more than three strands of mini light sets together and no more than 50 screw-in type bulbs together. Adhere to manufacturer's instructions regarding LED light strands.
- Keep live Christmas trees thoroughly watered.
- Ensure artificial Christmas trees are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Do not use real lighted candles on Christmas trees, near curtains or draperies, or where children or pets can come into direct contact with them.
- Remain in kitchen when cooking food on the stove.
- When leaving home make sure doors and windows are locked, candles are blown out, Christmas lights are turned off, and no food is cooking on stove.
- Do not smoke around the Christmas tree or wrapped presents.
- Keep walkways and steps clear of snow and ice.
- Use outdoor lighting.

**Practice personal safety.**

- Don't drink, text, or use drugs while driving. Always have a designated driver.
- Carry purse in front of body. Carry wallet in front pocket.
- Do not leave purse, wallet, or other personal or purchased items unattended.
- Lock car windows and car doors.
- Be aware of surroundings. Stay in well-lit areas, have keys in hand before leaving store or home, and walk with others.
- Keep cell phone charged and easily accessible.
- Plan your travel and inform others of your travel plans. Let others know if you are going to be arriving later than planned.
- Ask for directions at a reputable location such as a law enforcement agency, gas station, or restaurant.
- Trust your intuition and avoid unsafe situations.
- If you are licensed and carrying a concealed weapon ensure you are in compliance with local concealed carry laws as they vary among jurisdictions.

Planning is the best safety strategy, it saves money, time, and lives. Each of us making safety a part of our everydayness helps to increase the safety of our family, friends, and community. For more information on holiday safety, please visit these websites:

[www.weather.com/activities/driving/drivingsafety/drivingsafetytips/winterize.html](http://www.weather.com/activities/driving/drivingsafety/drivingsafetytips/winterize.html)

[www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/Winter\\_Holiday\\_Safety.pdf](http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/Winter_Holiday_Safety.pdf)

Wishing each of you a safe and fun-filled holiday season!

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*Ag Safety S.T.A.T. - Safe Tactics for Ag Today* is an e-mail newsletter prepared by Dee Jepsen, Extension Agricultural Safety Specialist and team members from the State Safety Office, in the Department of Food,

Agricultural and Biological Engineering at OSU. The primary goal of this monthly newsletter is to help you stay connected to everyday safety news and activities that may be used in your own newsletters or programs. If you have safety-related questions or program ideas that you would like to share, please contact Dr. Jepsen at [jepsen.4@osu.edu](mailto:jepsen.4@osu.edu)

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