

NIFS Update



Information from the National Institute for Farm Safety

April 2005

Volume 10

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NIFS Conference Facts

Date:

June 26-30, 2005

Location:

Wintergreen Resort,
Wintergreen, VA

Hotel Reservations:

Call 800/266-2444;
mention GROUP
CODE 4035KW

Special Rates:

CUTOFF DATE:
May 24. Single or
double room- \$109
per night; two BR
condo (request Black
Rock Village) \$232/
night; children stay
free

Conference

Registration:

NIFS members and
students: \$250 until
May 1; \$300 after May
1. For non-members:
\$325 until May 1; \$375
after May 1.

More Information:

www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~agsafety/NIFS/nifs.htm or
contact Bruce Stone,
Planning Chair, Ph:
804/290-1381, E-mail:
bruce.stone@vafb.com

2005 NIFS Annual Conference - "Prepare to Prevent"

If you have never been to the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, now is your chance to combine a unique summer vacation with an opportunity to network with agricultural safety and health professionals from across North America.

The NIFS 2005 Annual Conference hosted by the Virginia Farm Bureau will be held June 26-30 at Wintergreen Resort, Wintergreen, VA (www.WintergreenResort.com), an area where hiking and many other outdoor activities abound.

- Tuesday, June 28, tour either the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, where a test crash will be witnessed (**Note:** There is limited space and the minimum age is 16) or visit a working farm that includes a nursery and orchard.
- Monday, June 27, take a family tour to Monticello, home of former U.S. President Thomas Jefferson, and lunch at the historic Michie Tavern.
- Wednesday, June 29, there will be a Professional Improvement Session, which will include discussion on physical plant security issues and on certain agents regulated by USDA's APHIS-Veterinary Services Select Agent Program.

A wide variety of technical papers, educational displays and poster sessions have been accepted for the conference. Among the many topics are: injury potential to seat-belted tractor operators, the physical parameters of PTO entanglements, developing partnerships to address the safety issues of Hispanic workers, and financial barriers that limit farm families' access to health care.

For more on the area, visit these web sites: Walton's Mountain Museum (www.waltonmuseum.org), area wineries (www.virginiawines.org), historic Lexington (www.lexingtonvirginia.com), Blue Ridge Parkway (www.nps.gov/blri), Virginia is for Lovers (www.virginia.org), Montpelier (Pres. James Madison) (www.montpelier.org) and Monticello (Pres. Thomas Jefferson) (www.monticello.org).

Join us for an injury prevention workshop

If you're attending the NIFS 2005 Annual Conference, consider arriving in time to also attend a special workshop on childhood agricultural injury prevention to be held at Wintergreen from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday, June 25. The workshop is being co-sponsored by the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety and the North American Agromedicine Consortium.

Topics will include pediatric injury patterns and evidence-based injury prevention strategies. Discussions, debates and networking will enable participants to be more effective in their individual research and/or organizational program activities.

For more information, contact the National Children's Center at: 800-662-6900, nccrahs@mcrf.mfldclin.edu, or visit <http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children>

Agricultural Safety and Health Update

Longtime hog farmer learns tough lesson

Editor's note: Bill Fortin III of rural Danville, Iowa came close to losing his life from manure pit gases last October. This was excerpted with Bill's permission from a letter he wrote the following morning. As NIFS members, it's critical that we continue to talk with farmers about the extreme dangers of manure pit gases.

"I was lucky – I only lost 37 hogs yesterday. This morning, I'm still in bed beside my wife of 37 years. And I'm thinking how lucky I am to have just lost 37 hogs! I was pumping manure from the west pit in the 77 hog house. The building is 32 feet wide and 200 feet long. On the south side running its length is an eight foot wide by eight foot deep pit where the hog manure is held. The pit is covered with slats that the manure drops through. To pump the manure out, we have to take out about half the slats in an eight foot pen to drop in the pump.

I'm a licensed manure handler. Go to workshops every year to learn how, and at every meeting someone, usually from the Extension, warns about how deadly pit gases can be. Every year I read where someone has been killed by pit gases – often the person finding them dies trying to rescue them; sometimes many people die trying. In 27 years, I have never seen anything like that happen, but I'm aware of the dangers.

Yesterday, I had just moved to the west pit. I pumped 3,000 gallons into the manure spreader. I set the pump to agitation, opened up the throttle, and let the 105 horses blend the 15-20,000 gallons into an even mix. I went to my truck to get a pop. As I shut the door, I heard a hog squealing. Seemed odd. As I walked back, I could hear several squealing. I set the pop on the tractor step and grabbed the hog prod. I went around the open pit to the back of the pen. As I looked across the pen divider at the squealing pigs, I saw several laid out foaming at the nose – dead. Pit gases!

"I was thankful to be out - not because I feared dying, but because I feared if I did not make it out, whoever found me might die trying to save me."

At that same instant, I could feel myself getting dizzy and weak-kneed. I had no sense of smell – all I could see in a spinning world was the light coming in from the curtain. I sprinted for the opening 30 feet away. Not wanting to risk stumbling, I just dove over the open pit, landing on the concrete hard. I rolled, crawled and scrambled off the concrete, down the ramp, until I got in front of the loading chute. I didn't pass out, but I was lying with my face in the gravel unable to move. BUT... I was thankful to be out! I was thankful to be out not because I feared dying, but I feared if I did not make it out, whoever found me might die trying to save me.

Slowly my senses started coming back. I rolled over and could see the overcast sky come into focus. Feelings came back and my knees hurt. The hog house curtain had opened back up – it's on a controller that opens and closes as the temperature changes. I went around to the back of the hog house and set it manually to stay open so the breezes would keep the gases blown out. I finished loading the tank and went out and applied it. When I got back, I went in to see what had happened – I only lost 37 hogs!

This is a job I've done 100 times in the last 27 years. I'm not complacent about it. I know the dangers. And yet I learned something yesterday. I learned how fast those gases work and it shocked me. What made this time different? The ventilation curtain closed as I started the pump and the gases stayed in the barn rather than being mixed with just a little fresh air. Two minutes later it opened again and all was fine. That is a fine margin of life and death."

High altitude survival depends on your attitude

Did you know that those at the biggest risk of getting into trouble when climbing a mountain or undertaking another high altitude “adventure” are people who are the *most* physically fit? That was just one of the interesting insights NIFS members gained during the educational safety tour at the NIFS 2004 Annual Conference in Keystone, Colorado.

Participants took a chairlift to the top of beautiful Keystone Mountain, where National Ski Patrol member Chris Holmquist-Johnson and Wilderness Institute of Survival Education instructor Don Davis spoke. The two talked about the importance of using the appropriate personal protective equipment, such as helmets, when skiing, and dressing properly and carrying sufficient supplies when hiking or camping.

Those most at risk of acute mountain sickness are persons who are the most fit “because they climb too high and too fast. They may not feel it until they’re in a little more serious situation,” Holmquist-Johnson said.

It’s critical when hiking in the mountains to “have a lot of food and water along. Don’t just plan for the two hour hike you’re going on. Bring extra supplies in case something happens,” he added.

Davis said it’s important to be prepared for the “worst type climate you might run into,” to dress properly to avoid frostbite or hypothermia, and to make sure you have enough drinking water so you don’t become dehydrated. “One of the biggest problems we fight is attitude – the attitude that it can’t happen to me. You have to have the attitude that something can go wrong on this trip,” he said.

Survivability if something does happen, Davis said, is dependent upon a “positive mental attitude – you have to believe you can get out of this;” having the right equipment; having the skills and knowledge (take a first aid course and a wilderness survival course, he suggested); and not ignoring early “warning signs” that you are in trouble.

NIFS News

- NIFS Administrative Director Cheryl Skjolaas resigned her position last January, due to other obligations. Ron Saacke of the Virginia Farm Bureau is serving as Interim Secretary, and Glen Hetzel, a past NIFS President, is serving as Interim Treasurer.

- The NIFS Board has approved a new award category entitled **Contributions to Progress in Farm Safety**. This award will be given in recognition of research or outreach/ education activity conducted more than five years previously that contributed significantly to progress in the prevention of agricultural injury or illness. Candidates are eligible for the award on an annual basis.

Upcoming Events

May 9-11, 2005	National Injury Prevention and Control Conference <i>Denver, CO</i> (www.cdc.gov/ncipc/2005conference)
May 21-26, 2005	American Industrial Hygiene Assoc.: AIHce 2005 <i>Anaheim, CA</i> (www.aiha.org)
June 12-15, 2005	American Society of Safety Engineers: ASSE Professional Development Conf. & Expo <i>New Orleans, LA</i> (www.asse.org)
June 25, 2005	Training in Childhood Ag Injury Prevention <i>Wintergreen, VA</i> (http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children)
June 25-28, 2005	Agromedicine 18th Annual Meeting (NAAC) <i>Wintergreen, VA</i> (www.agromedicine.org)
June 26-30, 2005	NIFS Annual Conference <i>Wintergreen, VA</i> (www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~agsafety/NIFS/nifs.htm)
July 11-13, 2005	The Clock is Ticking for Rural America <i>Bloomington, MN</i> (www.agriwellness.org)
July 17-20, 2005	ASAE 2005 Meeting <i>Tampa, FL</i> (www.asae.org)
Sept. 18-22, 2005	World Congress on Safety and Health at Work <i>Orlando, FL</i> (www.safety2005.org)
Sept. 21-23, 2005	National Safety Council Congress & Expo 2005 <i>Orlando, FL</i> (www.nsc.org)

Letter from the President

NIFS Update is published by NIFS, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the professional development of ag safety and health professionals.

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Change in weather, change in your body, and change in an organization all are elements of life. NIFS is an organization that is experiencing normal changes.

If you are a member of NIFS, then you may have already heard the news about Cheryl resigning as Administrative Director. This change may seem abrupt, but the Board of Directors has been implementing an interim plan and is working on long-term solutions. We are handling some of the change with two interim positions of Treasurer and Secretary, filled by experienced NIFS members. Some extra delays may occur, but I am confident that most interactions should not experience any reduction in service.

What about change for you? Perhaps it is time for you or your organization to become an NIFS member. The valuable networking, professional development, and service to the agricultural community are a few important reasons to join. If you are already a member, then consider making the move to full membership. Imagine how you can contribute to the vitality of the organization by receiving voting status. And for the full member, it would be a good time to become more involved in the organizational structure by accepting the invitation to join a standing committee, lead a standing committee, or serve as an officer of NIFS.

As the 2005 Annual Meeting and Conference in Virginia draws near, it is time for you to make a purposeful change in how you interact with NIFS. Consider the value of your time and put it to good use in NIFS. This organization exists because of its members. Accept the challenge of change and make your impact.



Charles Schwab, NIFS President

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