

# NIFS Update



Information from the National Institute for Farm Safety

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## NIFS meeting creates new partnerships

### 2005 NIFS Meeting

Save these dates:  
June 26-30, 2005

These are the dates for the NIFS 2005 Annual Conference. The conference will be held at the Wintergreen Resort in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. We hope you'll plan on being there – and consider bringing your entire family. More details on the upcoming conference, plus more information on this scenic area of Virginia, will be in our April 2005 issue of *Update*.

Networking... new partnerships... a chance to learn about the *latest* research on such critical issues as how to greatly reduce agricultural tractor-related injuries and fatalities; respiratory and environmental health; injuries among adolescent farmworkers; and the specific needs of Hispanic/Latino workers.

These were just a few of the exciting benefits gained by NIFS members and others who attended the recent 2004 National Symposium on Agricultural Health and Safety held in Keystone, Colorado. Hosted by the High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety, the conference was the first time three major organizations - the National Institute for Farm Safety (NIFS), the NIOSH Agricultural Health & Safety Centers, and the North American Agromedicine Consortium - collaborated for such an event.

Plenary speakers, poster sessions, research presentations, and an educational

safety tour at the top of beautiful Keystone Mountain were all part of the conference, where participants shared intervention approaches and gained new "partners" in the important work of promoting agricultural safety and health.

NIOSH Director Dr. John Howard discussed changes in the demographics of the work force in the United States. "The average age for workers across all industries is increasing," he said, and the flow of immigrants into the U.S. creates the need for "transcultural" safety and health programming. "Latino men and women are much more likely to be employed in riskier occupations, including agriculture," he added. "I think Latino workplace safety is a national, a state, a regional, and a local issue."

Other major speakers at the conference discussed such topics as bioterrorism, agroterrorism, and communication with Hispanic/Latino farm employees.

## Effectively training Hispanic farm employees

Hispanic/Latino employees are becoming a valuable part of the agricultural work force, and effectively training them is "critical for the productivity of the business." That was the message Dr. Miguel Morales, a veterinarian and technical services specialist at the Monsanto Co., gave attendees at the 2004 NIFS Annual Conference in Keystone, Colorado. Although Morales focused on working with Hispanic dairy employees, his communication and training tips are important for any farmer, rancher or horticultural manager using Hispanic labor.

"Try to avoid the stereotypes," Morales suggested. "You wouldn't believe how many times people tell me, 'You don't look like a Mexican.' Let's try to change that." When communicating with Hispanic labor, he said, "know that Hispanics will communicate to build relationships first." For example, he said, one dairy farmer he worked with noticed that "everyone needed to be greeted every single day. So he'd walk around for 10 or 15 minutes, asking, 'How is your family?'," then the

worker would tell him about a sick cow. This saved him a ton of money."

In the Hispanic culture, Morales continued, touch, such as shaking hands, "is a sign of respect and trust." On the other hand, while eye contact is generally expected among Caucasians, "it is not necessary and is sometimes considered disrespectful" in Hispanic cultures.

Morales had these specific tips for training Hispanic workers: **1)** Use direct, simple messages. Don't mix instructions; talk about one task at a time. **2)** Give immediate feedback. **3)** Value your Hispanic workers' ideas; listen to them. **4)** Have job descriptions in place, and "prepare the training environment" by giving every new employee an orientation. **5)** Explain each step of the job, show your workers how to do it, then let them practice - and observe them. **6)** Praise your Hispanic workers for "right" behavior, and correct what's wrong. Praise, Morales said, and shaking hands, are especially important. "You'd be amazed at the difference it makes," he said.

# Agricultural Safety and Health Update

## Aiding farmers with Hispanic workers

### Farm Safety Week

“Agricultural Safety & Health... Yields for a Lifetime” is the theme of this year’s National Farm Safety and Health Week, Sept. 19-25. The week is an annual promotion from the National Safety Council honoring the hard work, diligence and sacrifice of our nation’s farmers and ranchers.

Public service announcements, logos, brochures, and one-page fact sheets are available at the following web site: [www.nsc.org/necas](http://www.nsc.org/necas)

How tuned in are you to the growth of the Hispanic/Latino agricultural work force in your state? Are you an effective resource for local farmers, ranchers, and horticultural employers who may need safety-related assistance with this population? As the growth of the Hispanic/Latino work force in agriculture continues, safety becomes even more critical.

Hispanics/Latinos already number nearly 39 million in the United States, and Census Bureau officials estimate that number will increase to 103 million by 2050. OSHA notes that while overall workplace fatalities fell in 2000 and 2001, deaths among Hispanic workers rose by 12 percent and 10 percent. A recent Associated Press investigation showed that one Mexican worker per day is dying on the job in the U.S.

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What can we as NIFS members do to assist the agricultural and horticultural employers we know who employ Hispanic workers? First, encourage them to learn about their workers’ cultures. Know, for example, that in many Hispanic cultures it is disrespectful to question anyone in “authority.” So while a Hispanic worker may appear to understand the safety messages he receives from his supervisor, in reality, he may not understand.

Secondly, encourage these employers to learn some Spanish. Yes, it’s important to give workers access to English classes, but even greeting Hispanic workers in their native language can go a long

way toward showing that the employer cares. Lastly, let the agricultural employers in your area know where to turn for translation services, information on English classes, obtaining GEDs, and other services that their Hispanic employees may need.

## Letter from the President

### Communication is critical

You have an open invitation! It’s just that simple; I am listening to what you have to say. I believe it is an important aspect of our task as members of the NIFS Board of Directors to be available to our membership and to listen. As any strong family will tell you, open communication is how you develop understanding and strength to face challenges. I opened a communication channel at our 2004 Annual Conference while I sat at the registration desk, and I hope to continue this tradition at the 2005 conference. It was a wonderful experience reconnecting with NIFS members, but more importantly, it reminded me of the value of this organization.

The 2004 conference in Keystone, Colorado brought three organizations together for a joint meeting which was a major challenge, but well worth the extra effort. We unofficially recorded the highest number of attendees for an NIFS conference. The diversity, quantity, and quality of the presentations were exceptional - so much so that the participants’ biggest dilemma was to decide which concurrent session to attend. I also know that we distributed more than 25 NIFS membership application forms. These are just a few noticeable impacts from this conference.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our conference partners: the North American Agromedicine Consortium, the NIOSH Agricultural Health & Safety Centers, and our host, the High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety. The conference was a notable success. I also want to thank our NIFS planning committee, Steve Freeman, and Cheryl Skjolaas. It was their efforts that made it a seamless conference for NIFS members.

As I close my presidential letter, I encourage you *not* to file NIFS away until June 2005 when we meet at Wintergreen Resort in Virginia. There are plenty of tasks to complete between now and our next annual meeting. Whether you are a committee chair, committee member, or an active member, help us keep NIFS business on the go.



Charles Schwab, NIFS President

## NIFS presents awards

Several research, special recognition, and President's awards were presented at the 2004 NIFS Annual Conference in Keystone, Colorado. **Research Awards** went to the following persons:

- **Fenske RA, Birnbau SC, Methner MM, Lu C, Nigg N.** 2002. Fluorescent tracer evaluation of chemical protective clothing during pesticide applications in central Florida citrus groves. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, 8(3): 319-331.
- **Myers, ML and Pana-Cryan, R.** 2000. Prevention effectiveness of rollover protective structures – Parts I-III. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, 6(1): 29-70.
- **Walker-Bone, K and Palmer, KT.** 2002. Musculoskeletal disorders in farmers and farmworkers. *Occupational Medicine (Great Britain)*, 52(8): 441-450.

**Special Recognition Awards** were presented on behalf of the NIFS Research and Development Committee to: **Don Dillman** (Historical Research Contribution) for his work entitled "The Design and administration of mail surveys," which was published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*; **Edward Stuart** and his collaborators (Historical Prevention Contribution) for the efforts in Sweden that resulted in the world's first effective rollover protection legislation; and **Robert "Chip" Petrea** (Special Research Contribution) for his lead efforts in producing the document entitled "Using History and Accomplishments to Plan for the Future: A Summary of 15 Years in Agricultural Safety and Health, and Action Steps for Future Directions."

Outgoing NIFS President Bruce Stone also presented three **President's Awards** to the following NIFS members: **Steve Freeman** for his leadership as the 2004 Annual Conference planning chairperson; **Robert "Chip" Petrea** for his outstanding leadership as NIFS's 2004 Professional Improvement Committee chairperson; and **Chuck Schwab** for his leadership, compassion, and "willingness to do what was needed to get the job done."

### NIFS Board News

The NIFS Board of Directors has been busy working on behalf of its members! Among the Board's actions earlier this year were the following:

- 1) Agreement by the majority of Board members to act as the NIFS Planning Committee for the joint June 2004 Annual Conference held in Keystone, Colorado.
- 2) A decision to charge NIFS committees with specific tasks to assist in updating organizational information.
- 3) Discussion about the importance of keeping members involved throughout the year, and listening to members' needs.

### Upcoming Events

- Sept. 12-14, 2004:** **Cultivating a Sustainable Agricultural Workplace**  
*Troutdale, OR* (<http://agcenter.ucdavis.edu>)
- Oct. 21-23, 2004:** Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health: RURAL HEALTH: Celebrating Diversity & Strength  
*Sudbury, Ontario, Canada* (<http://iareh.usask.ca/>)
- Oct. 21-23, 2004:** **17<sup>th</sup> Annual East Coast Migrant Stream Forum**  
*St. Petersburg, FL* ([www.ncphca.org](http://www.ncphca.org))
- Nov. 6-10, 2004:** **American Public Health Assoc. 132<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting**  
*Washington, DC* ([www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org))
- Nov. 18-20, 2004:** **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Farmworker Stream Forum**  
*Denver, CO* ([www.ncfh.org](http://www.ncfh.org))
- Nov. 29-Dec. 4, 2004:** **Nordic Meeting on Agricultural Occupational Health**  
*Hamra/Stockholm, Sweden* ([Peter.Lundqvist@jbt.slu.se](mailto:Peter.Lundqvist@jbt.slu.se))
- Jan. 28-30, 2005:** **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Migrant Stream Forum**  
*San Diego, CA* ([www.nwrpca.org](http://www.nwrpca.org))
- May 21-26, 2005:** **American Industrial Hygiene Assoc.: AIHce 2005**  
*Anaheim, CA* ([www.aiha.org](http://www.aiha.org))
- June 12-15, 2005:** **American Society of Safety Engineers: ASSE Professional Development Conference & Expo**  
*New Orleans, LA* ([www.asse.org](http://www.asse.org))
- June 26-30, 2005:** **National Institute for Farm Safety, Inc. Annual Conf.**  
*Wintergreen, VA*  
([www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~agsafety/NIFS/nifs.htm](http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~agsafety/NIFS/nifs.htm))

## New tractor plan aims at saving lives

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A new national initiative aimed at greatly reducing agricultural tractor-related injuries and fatalities in the United States was presented to more than 90 participants at a session at the 2004 National Symposium on Agricultural Health and Safety.

The nine NIOSH Agricultural Health & Safety Centers and the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety are spearheading the National Agricultural Tractor Safety Initiative. The organizations hope to partner with others throughout agriculture "to make previous cultural norms regarding tractor safety unacceptable to a majority of community members."

Tractors continue to be the No.1 cause of agricultural fatalities in the U.S., according to National Safety Council statistics. Overturns, entanglements in PTO drivelines, runovers, and highway collisions account for approximately 250 tractor-related deaths each year. "A combination of practicing basic safety and using rollover protective structures (ROPS), seat belts, machine guards, and other engineering controls would prevent most fatalities and serious injuries. Yet for a variety of reasons - custom, cost and convenience among them - these measures aren't widely adopted," the National Agricultural Tractor Safety initiative document states.

## Convincing farmers is key

This document includes suggestions in the areas of Leadership, Policy and Funding, Partnerships and Promotion, and Research. Among them are to: establish a range of incentives to retire older tractors or retrofit them with ROPS; increase the use and maintenance of preventive and protective technologies; mount a "social marketing campaign" aimed at safer tractor use; and build private and public sector (especially legislative) support.

Comments from NIFS members and others at the session included: build partnerships with commodity organizations, USDA, manufacturers, dealers, farmers and their spouses; "exhaust every other opportunity before moving to regulations"; and find a way to change the mindset of many farmers.

"What we have here is that as professionals we are trying to solve a problem that the farmers do not think they have. It is not a technical or policy problem. It is convincing the farmers," one participant said.

The National Agricultural Tractor Safety Initiative document is available online at: [http://depts.washington.edu/pnash/files/Tractor\\_Initiative.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/pnash/files/Tractor_Initiative.pdf). Or, call 800/662-6900, Option 0, or E-mail: [nccrahs@mmrf.mfldclin.edu](mailto:nccrahs@mmrf.mfldclin.edu).

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