

NIFS Update



Information from the National Institute for Farm Safety

April 2003

Volume 8

Issue 1

Join us for a 'journey' to Canada

NIFS Annual Conference Facts

Dates: June 22-26, 2003

Location: Windsor,
Ontario, Canada

Conference hotel:
Hilton Windsor, Ph:
800/445-8667; MUST
mention Group Code
FSC for special rates

Additional rooms:
Radisson Riverfront,
Ph: 519/977-9777 or
800/333-3333

**Special rates
(CANADIAN dollars):**
\$150/night (single or
double); \$160/night
(triple); \$170/night
(quad); children under
13 FREE

**CUTOFF date for
special rates:** May 15

**Conference registration
(CANADIAN dollars):**
NIFS members –
\$350 before May 15;
\$425 after May 15.

Non-members –
\$425 before May 15;
\$500 after May 15

Payment: Registration
fees must be paid in
Canadian dollars, via
Visa or MasterCard or
Canadian Money Order

For more information:
Michele Brown,
Ph: 519/823-5600, E-mail:
mbrown@farmsafety.ca

If you've thought about taking a trip to Canada, but weren't quite sure when, this coming June presents a great opportunity! Windsor, Ontario – a city known for its wide variety of attractions, including the arts, entertainment, professional sports and festivals – is the site of the National Institute for Farm Safety, Inc. (NIFS) 2003 Annual Conference.

The dates are June 22-26, and the theme is *Life is a journey, travel safely*. The coordinator of this year's conference, to be held at the Hilton Windsor Hotel, is the Farm Safety Association Inc.

All NIFS members and non-members interested in networking with agricultural safety and health professionals from throughout the United States and Canada are welcome to attend.

Among the highlights of the upcoming conference are:

- a Sunday night opening reception at the Canadian Club Brand Heritage Center, including a tour of Hiram Walker's executive building
- Tuesday afternoon tours of either Rol-land Mushroom Farms and Pelee Island Winery, a traditional European winery; or the winery and Family Tradition Foods, a large processor and marketer of frozen vegetables
- presentations, poster sessions, and educational displays on a wide variety of

current agricultural safety and health issues

- another *Both Sides of the Fence* debate (see page 3 for more information)
- a Professional Improvement session presented by Dr. Mary Ann Cooper of the University of Illinois-Chicago on *Electrical Safety on the Farm, Including Lightning*

Still more activities

If you're looking for even more chances to network, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association will be holding its semi-annual board meetings in Windsor at the same time as the start of the NIFS conference.

And if you're thinking about bringing your family on the trip, specific family events are being planned, including a children's pizza party and a tour to a historic fort and a greenhouse complex complete with a petting zoo and indoor miniature golf course.

Conference attendees who like to play golf will have an opportunity during special tee times being set aside at a local golf course. Also, the International Freedom Festival will be taking place that week, with attractions close to the hotel.

For more information on the conference and on Windsor, visit these web sites: www.ag.ohio-state.edu/agsafety/NIFS/meetings03.htm and www.visitwindsor.com

Tips on international travel to/from Canada

If you're planning on attending the National Institute for Farm Safety's (NIFS) Annual Conference in Windsor, Ontario, Canada in June, it's important that you be properly prepared in advance for international travel from the United States.

With the U.S. on "high" alert at the time of this printing, be sure to allow plenty of extra time for security checks at the U.S.-Canadian border – whether you're traveling by plane or by car. And don't be surprised if it takes you even longer to get through security when you're returning to the United States.

At the very least, be able to show security officials in both countries a government-issued photo ID (such as an unexpired driver's license) **and** a passport (by far the best, if possible) or a certified state or federal government-issued birth

certificate (hospital-issued birth certificates are **not** acceptable). Due to heightened security worldwide, it's best to keep proof of citizenship on you at all times while in Canada.

There are a number of web sites where you can get good information on travel to and from Canada, security and customs requirements, driving in Canada, and the current situation worldwide.

These include: www.visitwindsor.com (look at Before You Go for information on Customs and Immigration); www.immigration.gov/graphics/shared/lawenfor/bmgmt/inspect/docrequirements.htm; www.dhs.gov (the Immigration & Borders link); and www.dwtunnel.com (the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel Corp.).

Timely debate is planned

If you've participated in NIFS annual conferences in the past, you'll know that one of the most popular events has been the *Both Sides of the Fence* debate. In these debates, volunteer panelists from NIFS have offered opposing perspectives on such controversial issues as whether parents should be held legally accountable for agricultural injuries to their own children if "reckless endangerment" seems indisputable, and whether or not tractors should be equipped with "extra rider" seats.

The National Farm Medicine Center is working with the Farm Safety Association Inc. to plan another interesting and

informative *Both Sides of the Fence* debate during the upcoming June 22-26, 2003 NIFS Annual Conference in Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Topics under consideration at press time included regulations in agriculture, NIFS advocacy, and off-road vehicle issues.

The purpose of *Both Sides of the Fence* is to generate dialogue over complex and controversial practices in agricultural health and safety.

Through this interactive process, it is hoped that these discussions will guide individuals and organizations in identifying their own positions on these issues.

News for NIFS members

Some important news for NIFS members: First, a reminder that NIFS's business year runs from June 1-May 31. So if it's at all possible to renew your membership and pay your dues by May 15, Administrative Director Cheryl Skjolaas would greatly appreciate it! If you didn't receive your membership renewal statement or have any other questions, Cheryl can be reached at Ph: 608/265-0568 or E-mail: nifsad@tds.net

Secondly, the results of the member balloting on NIFS's proposed new mission statement will be announced at the annual

conference in Ontario in June. The draft statement, which was approved by the NIFS Board of Directors, reads: "NIFS is an organization dedicated to the professional development of agricultural safety and health professionals, providing national and international leadership in preventing agricultural injuries and illnesses to the agricultural community. NIFS provides opportunities for sharing information about research and intervention programs, improving professional skills and knowledge, networking and other supportive activities."

Upcoming Events

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|--------------------------|--|
| May 10-15, 2003: | American Industrial Hygiene Conference and Expo
<i>Dallas, Texas</i> |
| May 29-30, 2003: | The Clock is Ticking for Rural America: A Behavioral Health and Safety Conference
<i>Kansas City, Missouri</i> |
| June 22-25, 2003: | American Society of Safety Engineers Safety 2003 Conference
<i>Denver, Colorado</i> |
| June 22-26, 2003: | National Institute for Farm Safety 2003 Annual Conference
<i>Windsor, Ontario, Canada</i> |
| July 27-30, 2003: | American Society of Agricultural Engineers Annual International Meeting
<i>Las Vegas, Nevada</i> |
| Sept. 5-12, 2003: | National Safety Council Congress & Expo: Taking Safety to New Heights
<i>Chicago, Illinois</i> |
| Sept. 8-9, 2003: | Challenges in Agriculture Health & Safety 2003
<i>San Francisco, California</i> |
| Oct. 19-23, 2003: | Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health, University of Saskatchewan: Future of Rural Peoples International Symposium
<i>Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada</i> |

Agricultural Safety and Health Update

Recognizing the dangers of manure pits

By Barbara Mulhern
Editor, NIFS Update

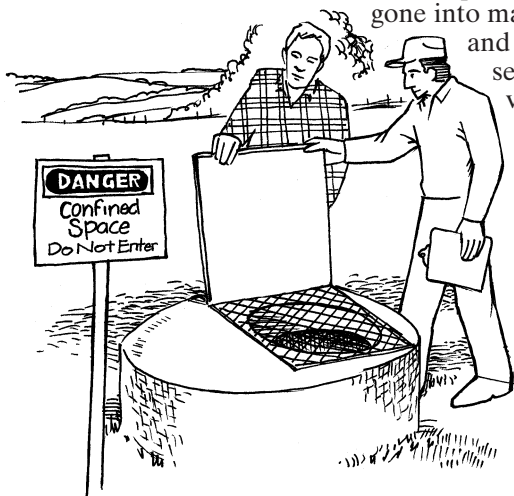
In Macy, Indiana, a 4-year-old boy is found dead after apparently falling through a metal cover over a liquid manure pit on his family's farm. In Mansfield, Pennsylvania, a 15-year-old youth working on a dairy farm slides the tractor he is operating into an open manure pit, is engulfed, and dies. And in Kewaunee County, Wisconsin, a 53-year-old farmer and his 23-year-old son are discovered dead inside a 10-foot deep manure pit after a failed rescue attempt by the son.

NIFS members have long heard stories similar to these recent incidents. Yet throughout the country, farmers continue to fail to take proper precautions to protect themselves, their family members and their employees from the dangers of manure pits and other confined spaces.

"Entering a manure pit is like playing Russian roulette," Mark Purschwitz, former NIFS president and University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension agricultural safety and health specialist, says. "Some farmers have gone into manure pits without consequence,

and they have a false sense of security. However, conditions can vary, and entering and exiting 10 times does not guarantee surviving the 11th entry."

One of the major hazards of manure pits is the accumulation of certain toxic gases. These gases include hydrogen sulfide (which is heavier than air and has a "rotten egg" smell in lower concentrations, but is odorless in high concentrations), carbon dioxide (also heavier than air), methane, and ammonia.



"As hard as it may be, no one should attempt to rescue a person who has collapsed in a manure storage facility without wearing a proper safety harness, without specialized training and experience, and without a properly maintained SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) respirator," Dr. Steve Kirkhorn, medical director of Occupational Health Services at the Immanuel-St. Joseph's-Mayo Health System in Mankato, Minnesota says.

It's also important that you never assume that the air inside a manure storage facility is safe to breathe unless it has been tested.

Here are some tips to pass on to farmers to reduce the risk of severe injuries and fatalities in manure pits and other confined spaces:

1. Survey your operation for the presence of confined spaces; then post sturdy, weatherproof warning signs on or next to them.
2. Make sure that these signs are understandable to any employees who can't speak English and to those who can't read.
3. Regularly inspect all warning signs to ensure that they are clean, readable, and have not been removed.
4. Cover or block off all openings to confined spaces. For example, cover openings to manure pits with metal grills and solid covers. Also, fence off all open manure pits.
5. Check with your state or federal OSHA office to see if you are covered by OSHA's Confined Spaces Standard (Title 29 CFR, Part 1910.146). If you are, become familiar with all of its requirements.
6. Train all family members and employees in the dangers of manure pits and other confined spaces.

Letter from the President

Let's all work to 'Get 'er Done!'

This year's NIFS Annual Conference is in Windsor, Ontario, June 22-26. The preliminary program indicates that this will be an outstanding meeting, thanks to the planning committee. This year's theme, *Life is a journey, travel safely*, is excellent in that it portrays the role we play as safety and health professionals, and maybe reflects on our personal lives. We hope that you can attend the meeting.

Here in Idaho, there is a local car dealer that uses an advertisement slogan "Get 'er Done!" The TV ads portray several scenarios in which a salesman calls the owner of the dealership and asks if a certain deal is alright, and the owner says: "Get 'er Done!" Wouldn't it be nice if we were able to do the same in the agricultural safety and health area? If some authority says that there are too many incidents in ag with a particular commodity, say potatoes, and says to reduce the numbers, "Get 'er Done!" So some paperwork is

processed and the problem is solved.

In real life, we know this is not possible as we deal with people and traditions. It takes some persuasion, education, research, and perhaps regulation to "Get 'er Done." This leads to what NIFS is all about – networking with other professionals in the field to find out what others have done and perhaps share your experiences with your colleagues to find a better way. Then perhaps we will "Get 'er Done" with agricultural safety and health.

See you in Windsor!

Tom Karsky, NIFS President

The hazards of 'bypass starting'

Editor's note:

A special thanks to NIFS member Charles Brundage and Earle Morton, both product safety managers at AGCO Corp., for their technical assistance with this article.

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Each year, a few farmers, farmworkers or mechanics are crushed and seriously injured or killed after "bypass starting" a tractor or other vehicle that is in gear. "Bypass starting" involves touching a wrench or screwdriver to the terminals of the starter motor or to the solenoid of a tractor or to the starter of any self-propelled vehicle. This bypasses all neutral start switches in the tractor's electrical and hydraulic systems. After a few sparks, the circuit is completed and the starter engages, starting the engine.

Unfortunately, however, what also may happen is that the tractor or vehicle may be in gear and it suddenly lurches forward or backward – catching the farmer by surprise. The person is then pulled down by the drive wheel, and is crushed, seriously injured or killed.

Regularly checking to make sure neutral start switches are functioning correctly will help you avoid the temptation of bypass starting an engine – and may save your life. Here are some steps to follow while seated in the operator's seat:

1. Check to make sure there are no bystanders or obstructions nearby. On equipment with a separate fuel shut-off control, keep the control in the OFF position.

For each test, turn the start switch to the START position only long enough to determine if the starter is being activated – that is, just a very brief ON-OFF.

2. Depress the clutch and brake pedals. Try to start the engine with the gearshift in neutral and the power takeoff (PTO) in neutral. The starter should engage.

3. Know that manufacturers have used a number of ways to provide neutral start protection for the transmission/ground drive. The switch may be operated by the gearshift, the clutch pedal, or, on some equipment with hydrostatic drive, on the ground speed control.

Depress the brake pedal but not the clutch pedal, place the PTO control in neutral, place the gearshift in a position other than neutral, move the ground speed control lever, if so equipped, away from the neutral position and try to engage the starter. The starter should not engage.

4. Depress the clutch and brake pedals. Try to start the tractor with the gearshift in neutral and the PTO engaged. Again, the starter should not engage.

5. If the starter engages in either test 3 or 4, be sure repairs are made to correct the problem before the equipment is used.

New resource

Longtime NIFS member Dennis Murphy, Extension safety specialist at Penn State University, has authored a new book entitled *Looking Beneath the Surface of Agricultural Safety and Health*.

The 112-page book, which includes a history of NIFS over the years, scrutinizes past and current

approaches to agricultural safety and health, and offers suggestions. Among the topics included are injury trends and the nature of farm work.

The book is available from the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, Ph: 269/429-0300; Fax: 269/429-3852; or web site: www.asae.org/pubs



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