



Guide to Communicating Farm Safety for Editors, Illustrators, Cinematographers, and Photographers¹

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Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the United States, and, unfortunately, claims children among the highest in accident rates. It is crucial that those responsible for mass media messages take care to contribute positively to farm safety.

Safe farm practices must be conveyed not just with words, but with visual accuracy. Visual errors can actually negate the verbal message. These errors can not only cause costly remakes and irate letters to editors, they can telegraph subliminal messages to the public that were not meant to be sent. One wrong picture can **undo** a thousand words!

Using articles and stories emphasizing actual experiences of how safe work habits have averted tragedy is a tried-and-true attention-getter. But be careful what your pictures are saying while the words are being read or spoken.

The following guidelines give editors, illustrators, cinematographers, and photographers a list of positive safety steps to safeguard against communicating wrong subliminal messages. They are not meant to cover all the possibilities; therefore, the most important rule of all is "**When in doubt, ASK!**" — farm safety consultants, Extension safety leaders, or appropriate state Extension specialists.

DO....SHOW TRACTORS AND OTHER FARM EQUIPMENT BEING MAINTAINED AND OPERATED SAFELY

- Tractors should have roll over protection structures.
- If a tractor is shown being operated on a public road, be sure it has a properly mounted "slow-moving vehicle" emblem and flashing amber lights.
- The tractor must be operated at a reasonable speed, by an adult wearing a seat belt.

DO NOT....show individuals of any age riding in or on the backs of pick-up trucks, wagons, or tractors; stepping over a rotating shaft; leaning over a conveyer; hand-feeding materials into any machine with moving parts or blades; or using ladders in a haphazard manner.

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DO....PORTRAY FARM WORKERS IN PROPER CLOTHING FOR THE JOB

- When showing farm workers with machinery, be sure they are not wearing items that could become entangled in moving machine parts; i.e., jewelry, drawstrings, bandannas or ties, or loose clothing.
- Farm workers using all-terrain vehicles should be depicted wearing helmets, goggles, pants, work boots, gloves, and long sleeves.
- Workers handling hay, grain, or silage inside structures should be shown wearing dust masks.
- Show farmworkers mixing or applying chemicals in safety attire, according to whether the chemical is in concentrated or diluted form (see manufacturer's recommendations).

Chemical concentrate handlers should wear hardhats, coveralls over regular clothing, chemical-resistant aprons, chemical-resistant gloves and boots, face shields or goggles, and respirators, if the chemical label so recommends.

When using diluted chemicals, protective clothing needs range from minimum exposure (granular applications and other routine pesticide activities), to maximum exposure (direct contact with drenching spray, mist blower, or handling highly toxic pesticides). **Minimum exposure** requires coveralls over regular clothing, chemical resistant gloves, and socks and shoes or boots. **Maximum exposure** requires chemical-resistant hoods or hats, goggles or face shields, respirators (if label requires, or if dust, fogs, or vapors will be generated), chemical-resistant protective suits worn over normal work clothes, and chemical resistant gloves and boots.

DO....BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL WHEN USING CHILDREN IN PICTURES

Children handling and feeding newborn or small animals is a sure way to catch the public's attention. But the children being photographed may catch the unwanted attention of adult animals who can be dangerously protective of their offspring.

DO NOT....place children in a risky situation for the sake of your story. Always isolate the babies from the adult animals during filming.

DO....PROJECT POSITIVE IMAGES, IN WORDS AND PICTURES

- When writing about children, write of normal activities and chores suitable to the age(s) of the children.

DO NOT....show children under 14 driving any motorized farm vehicle, or riding, climbing, standing, or playing on farm machinery. Remember: unusual responsibility may be admirable in advanced youngsters, but consider what is unsafe for the average child.

- Frame photos to exclude any potential safety hazard that is impossible to eliminate physically.
- Try to include visible safety measures around the farm within overall shots; i.e., smoke alarms and fire extinguishers mounted prominently in barns, sheds, and other outbuildings.
- Photograph areas free of clutter, show clean, obviously well-maintained machinery and equipment. Dirt, clutter, and rust imply carelessness.
- Cover positive stories on adult and youth groups involved in safety workshops and projects.
- Locate agriculturally connected businesses in your community that have excellent safety records. Detail their safety programs and provide graphic illustrations of accident/cost reduction ratios.

Contrasting bad images that illustrate **what not to do** is, of course, an effective means of making a positive point. If you use this method, be sure the "**wrong way**" message is clearly and frequently stated, followed immediately with a strong verbal or visual image of the **right** way.