



# Hay Bale Deaths Are Preventable

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NEW YORK (Reuters) - Serious injuries and deaths among farmers from accidents involving heavy hay bales can be prevented by using tractors outfitted with the proper equipment, according to this week's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia.

Federal occupational safety and health experts note that a key factor in these accidents is the widespread use of baling machines available since the mid-1970s - machines that produce large round bales weighing between 750 and 1,500 pounds. At least 87 farm deaths involving heavy bales have occurred between 1980 and 1995.

In their MMWR report, the experts cite cases in which deaths occurred when a heavy bale fell backwards off a loader and onto a tractor operator, when a tractor transporting a bale rolled over, or when an unsecured bale fell from a transport trailer and crushed a farm worker. "In general, bales can be transported more safely by tractors equipped with rear attachments rather than front-end loaders," a CDC editorial states. But the CDC notes that if front-end loaders must be used to transport large bales - round or square - they should be fitted with attachments "specifically designed to secure large bales, and loaders should not be raised or lowered while the tractor is in motion."

The agency also says all tractors should be equipped with a rollover protective structure that surrounds the operator along with a seat belt.

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