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New Materials Teach Children about Farm Safety Hazards

Some 150,000 to 200,000 children are injured on U.S. farms and ranches each year, according to the National Children's Safety Network. How can rural children and their city friends learn about safety hazards on the farm?

A new set of fun, educational materials developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service's Farm Safety and Health Program can help teachers, 4-H leaders, extension educators, and other rural leaders looking for educational resources. "We've developed some fun ways to teach kids about serious matters, like deadly manure pit gases, tractor rollovers, and livestock handling," says Michele Schermann, who designed the teaching materials.

John Shutske, U of M extension farm safety and health specialist, says, "Our evaluations of successful youth education programs show that kids learn important safety skills when the material is presented in a fun, hands-on fashion. Our materials emphasize hazard recognition and avoidance."

The farm safety topics set is appropriate for school-age children and pre-teens. While aimed at farm children, the principles apply to all children whether they live on a farm, visit the farm, or have never been to a farm.

Each set of plans includes a printed list of teaching objectives, a materials list for building a demonstration from easy-to-find materials, discussion topics, and a list of printed and audio visual resource materials available from the Minnesota Extension Service and other agencies. Farm safety topics in the set include: lawnmower safety, reaction time, manure pit dangers, and tractor rollover protection.

The parts of the set can be used individually or all at one time such as at a "farm safety camp." The materials can also be used in school to teach other topics. "For example," Schermann says, "the tractor rollover demonstration can be used by teachers in a science class to demonstrate laws of motion and principles of gravity and acceleration."

For more information on ordering these farm safety materials, contact Michele Schermann at (612) 624-7444.

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