



# Farm Safety: Prevention, Rescue, and Rehabilitation<sup>1</sup>

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Agriculture continues to be the most hazardous U.S. industry, despite decreases in overall work-related accidents. In 1989, an estimated 1,300 lives were lost, and 120,000 disabling injuries experienced on farms and ranches. Victims of farm-related injuries in the United States incur approximately \$2.5 billion in hospital and rehabilitation costs each year.

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) has developed and put into practice educational programs that apply a holistic approach to agricultural safety and health. Programs range from **PREVENTION** of traumatic injury and health hazards, to **RESCUE** of farm accident victims, to **REHABILITATION** of farmers with disabling injuries. These programs complement and mutually support one another. For example, **rescue** programs stress **prevention** of further injuring victims and preventing rescuer injuries. **Rehabilitation** programs stress safe practices and workplace modifications for **prevention** of additional injuries.

## PREVENTION

CES supports farm safety education programs in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The programs teach farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers, and farm families how to:

1. prevent farm accidents involving tractors, machinery, livestock, and farm structures; and
2. reduce exposure to occupational health hazards, such as noise, farm chemicals, dust, and infectious agents.

State farm safety leaders develop programs to meet their states' most critical needs.

## RESCUE

CES trainers have taught more than 17,000 professional rescuers farm accident rescue procedures (see Figure 1). Nonprofessionals are taught correct immediate emergency response. The Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service has widely distributed three publications: *First on the Scene* (for nonprofessionals), and *Farm Accident Rescue and Extinguishing Silo Fires* (for firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians). Purdue University, in Indiana, produced the *Agricultural Medic Instructor Training Guide*. The information in these publications is crucial to reducing rescuer injuries and further injury to victims, and in emphasizing the value of accident prevention.



**Figure 1.** Demonstration of grain auger rescue at Cooperative Extension Service field day.

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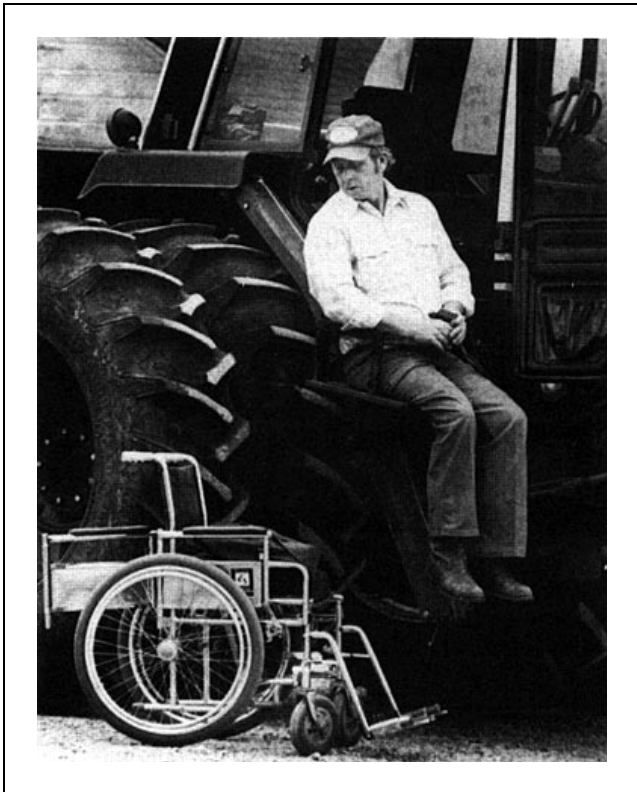
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## REHABILITATION

More than 500,000 agricultural workers have physical disabilities that limit their ability to do their jobs. Each year, more than 100,000 disabling injuries happen on farms, many of which are far removed from urban-based sources of help. Rural locations also generally lack specialized education or therapy facilities needed to put the disabled to work in safe and productive agricultural operations (see Figure 2).

CES has exceptional programs and expertise, such as the *Breaking New Ground Resource Center* in Indiana, and the *Rural and Farm Family Vocational Rehabilitation Program* in Vermont. To meet needs, CES rehabilitation programs often draw upon partnerships with other organizations such as the Iowa Easter Seal Society's Farm Family Rehabilitation Management (FaRM) Program.



**Figure 2.** One of several tractor lifts developed for farmers with spinal cord injuries.

Congress has provided new funds to establish and enhance educational and assistance programs for farmers with disabilities. To initiate this program, grants were awarded to Extension Service/Easter Seal partnerships in 10 states. State projects are underway in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, New York, Vermont, and Wisconsin, and a regional program serving Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming.

To find out what programs and resources are available in your area, contact the Cooperative Extension County Agent (listed in your local telephone directory, usually under county government) or Extension Farm Safety Leader, who is at your state land-grant institution.