

# Keeping Kids Safe



## BY THE NUMBERS

**2.2 million**

Number of U.S. farms

**1.04 million**

Number of young people under age 24 living on farms

**15,012**

Number of serious injuries to young people on farms

**25%**

Percent of those injuries caused by farm work

Source: National Center for National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, 2009

## BY HOLLIE HENDRIKSON

**F**resh farm foods, vast open spaces to run and play, and an abundance of fresh air are a few perks of farm life for children and adolescents living on farms across the United States.

These benefits, however, come with risks. Farming is one of the few industries in which families often live on or near the work site, putting kids at risk for agriculture-related injuries, illnesses and deaths.

Young people need not participate in agricultural work to be vulnerable to the risks and hazards of farming. A 2006 Childhood Agricultural Injury Survey estimated that only 25 percent of non-fatal farm injuries among 15- to-24-year-olds were work related. The remaining 75 percent of children hurt were

not actively working when the injury occurred.

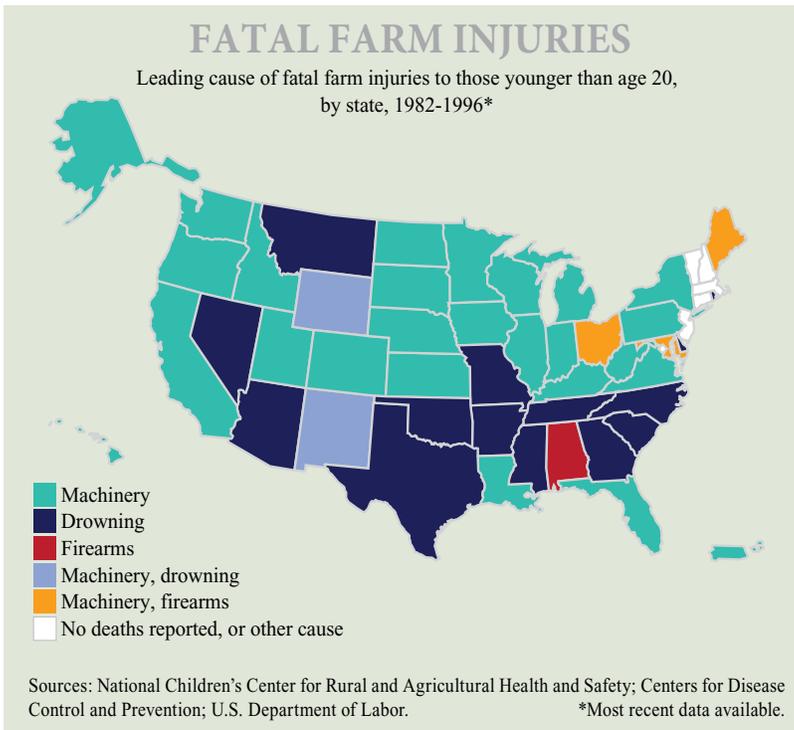
The three leading causes of farm and ranch fatalities among young people are farm machinery accidents (25 percent), motor vehicle accidents (17 percent) and drowning (16 percent).

Dangers also arose from exposure to pesticides and poisoning from other chemicals. All contributed to higher rates of injury and death among youth living on farms. Agriculture jobs have the second highest fatal injury rate for working youth, despite steady declines since 1998. The highest rate of fatal injury for young workers is among those employed in the mining industry.

Some states have recognized this as an important public health issue and have taken steps to reduce injuries and deaths among their young farming populations.

◆ Federal law identifies numerous agriculture tasks as hazardous and prohibits some of them for those younger than age 16,

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including operating or assisting in the operation of corn pickers, grain combines, hay movers, potato diggers, trenchers or earth-moving equipment. The ban also applies to power-driven circular, hand or chain saws. Fifteen states—Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Vermont—have more specific restrictions for children or teenagers when it comes to working with certain types of machinery.

- ◆ Montana children under age 14 or 15 are prohibited from certain agricultural activities, including repairing a building from a ladder or scaffold that is more than 20 feet from the ground; handling or using poisonous agricultural chemicals; and handling a blasting agent such as dynamite or black powder.

- ◆ Oregon law requires every state and local government agency with jurisdiction over farmworker activities to make “every effort to alleviate unsanitary, unsafe and overcrowded accommodations and special efforts should be directed toward mitigating hazards to families and children.”

- ◆ Pending New York legislation introduced in 2011 would require farm owners and operators to provide education and information to farm workers and their families about the hazards of exposure to pesticides, and how to avoid exposing children to them.

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