

Farm Injury Deaths Reducing

“There has been a large decrease in non-intentional farm injury deaths over the past 20 years, however many more deaths can be prevented” according to Dr Tony Lower from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety. “While this is a good news story, each farm injury death is one too many, as all individual cases cause great suffering for family, friends and whole communities”.

A recently released report, “Farm Injury Related Deaths in Australia 2003-06” is based on figures from the National Coroners Information System. The report identified that on average there were 82 non-intentional farm related injury deaths per year over the period. “This is a reduction of 44% compared to information from 1989-92 when there were an average of 146 deaths per year. There have also been similar decreases in rates of death per 10,000 farms and per 100,000 employees involved in agriculture” said Dr Lower.

The study results show that approximately 40% of all cases involve individuals over the age of 55 years, with a further 17% being to children aged less than 15 years.

Tractors (21%) remain the single leading cause of non-intentional injury death for adults, with quad bikes (8.5%), farm utilities (8.5%) and motorcycles (5.2%) also featuring commonly. While rollovers are still frequent (33%), run-overs are now the main type of event accounting for almost 50% of all tractor-related deaths.

For the 55 child deaths in this period, drowning in dams (23.6%) and other water bodies (21.9%), plus from riding or being a passenger on a quad bike (12.7%), remain the leading issues. “Another disturbing feature of the child deaths, was that 34% of cases involved visitors to the farm”.

“Agriculture has the unenviable record of ranking only second behind road transport as Australia’s most dangerous industry. However, the striking factor from this review is that there are effective solutions already available to reduce deaths from the major causes - tractors, quad bikes, farm utilities, farm motorcycles and to prevent drowning. While reductions in deaths over the past 20 years are fantastic, there really is a need to fast-track improvements”.

“Improving health and safety has a human face, as each death or serious injury prevented means that individuals, families and whole communities don’t have to cope with and manage the negative social, emotional and financial consequences that arise from these events”.

A copy of the report and a wide range of materials that can assist those that work and live on farms to reduce the risks to themselves, farm workers, family members and visitors, is available from the Farmsafe Australia web site - www.farmsafe.org.au or call the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety on 02 6752 5210 for further information.

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