

# MEDIA GUIDELINES

## for AGRICULTURAL SAFETY

### SPECIFIC TO CHILDREN/YOUTH

Children and teens are often at greater risk of injury than adults. They typically have less physical strength, shorter reach, and lack the coordination and balance of adults. Cognitively, it takes them longer to process information, they have shorter attention spans, and may lack the impulse control that adults have. They are also more likely to do what they see others doing, rather than what they are told.

This makes it vitally important to depict (visually and textually) children and teens in safe situations. If they're doing farm/ranch work, ensure tasks are age and ability appropriate.

Photos and videos are often used as "attention getters," but sometimes "cute" is unsafe, e.g., a cow licking a child's fingers. Other examples to avoid include a child playing in a grain bin, in close proximity to an adult animal, or riding an ATV without a helmet.



**Childhood Agricultural Safety Network**

**Website:**  
[cultivatesafety.org/casn](http://cultivatesafety.org/casn)

**Email:**  
[nccrahs@marshfieldresearch.edu](mailto:nccrahs@marshfieldresearch.edu)

**Phone:**  
1-800-662-6900

**T**he agricultural stories we share in traditional and social media can make life safer for farm and ranch families and workers. While not intentional, what we write, say, and the images we use can reinforce - and may even increase - unsafe farm practices.

To help minimize unsafe practices, the Childhood Agricultural Safety Network has compiled the following do's and don'ts as reminders. It is important for all of us to follow these points, whether we are journalists, safety & health professionals, educators, or posting on social media. Following them can help each of us be confident that we are doing our part for farm safety.



### VISUAL MEDIA

**DO** show tractors and other farm equipment being maintained and operated safely. That includes rollover protection structures (ROPS) on tractors, operators wearing seatbelts, and proper guards in place on power take off units (PTOs) and other moving parts.

**DO** show children doing age-appropriate chores under supervision.

**DO** show working individuals wearing proper fitting personal protective equipment, appropriate for the tasks they are performing. When depicting workers with machinery, make sure they are not wearing loose fitting clothing or anything (jewelry, drawstrings, bandana) that could become entangled.



**DO** be aware of the background. Is it free of clutter? Do buildings and equipment appear to be well-maintained? A clean, well-ordered background conveys an environment of safety and attention to detail.

**DO NOT** show individuals riding on wagons, in the backs of pickup trucks or as extra riders on tractors or ATVs.

**DO NOT** show persons climbing to heights without fall protection, stair or platform guarding.

**DO NOT** show workers leaning over or feeding materials into machines with moving parts or blades.

**DO NOT** show children under 14 driving any motorized farm vehicle.

**DO NOT** show children riding on adults' laps on ATVs or lawn tractors/riding mowers.

**DO NOT** show children in proximity to large animals unless appropriate barriers are evident.



## EMPHASIZE ADULT ROLE IN PREVENTION

### Adults should:

- 1) Provide young children with a safe play area instead of allowing them to play in the worksite.
- 2) Provide sufficient training and personal protective equipment for youth old enough to work.
- 3) Provide supervision as well, but note that supervision alone is insufficient to prevent injuries.



## EMPHASIZE SAFETY RESOURCES

To access resources and learn more about keeping children and adults safe while in the agricultural environment, visit [cultivatesafety.org](http://cultivatesafety.org)



This work is partially supported through a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) grant #U54OH009568.

04/24

## TEXT

**DO** use the word “incident” rather than “accident.” Evidence confirms that injuries are both predictable and preventable. “Accident” implies that the incident was an “act of God” or “bad luck.” Instead, use a word describing what happened, such as crash, collision, rollover, drowning, suffocation, runover, etc.

**DO** explain safety violations and/or prevention measures. Grim details of an injury are only part of the story. Make the story a teachable moment. Sometimes an injury can be prevented with a simple, inexpensive step, such as ensuring a power takeoff unit (PTO) shield is in its proper place.

**DO** follow up on long-term implications of a serious injury. Emphasizing the “courage” of a trauma victim during immediate recovery, and the outpouring of goodwill following an event, can overshadow long-term implications such as economic hardships, post-traumatic stress, and/or multiple follow-up surgeries.

**DO** depict production agriculture for what it is: an intense, high risk industry made even more stressful by unpredictable factors such as weather and crop prices.

**DO** include information on safety resources and programs available to readers, including helpline information if someone may be affected or triggered emotionally by the article (e.g., suicide story).

**DO NOT** say that a child killed in a farm incident, “died doing what he loved,” or that she, “loved to help daddy.” This implies that it’s OK to allow a child into an agricultural worksite, which is unsafe.

**DO NOT** include information, even if biographical, that promotes or glorifies unsafe behaviors, e.g., “he’s very experienced; he’s been driving a tractor since he was 9 years old.”

**DO NOT** attribute mishaps on the unpredictable nature of animals, the failure of machinery or the existence of other inanimate objects such as a protruding rock or a ditch that gives way.

**DO NOT** use “freak accident” when describing a traumatic event. Although an adverse event may seem unique, injury data will likely reveal that many similar events have occurred.

**DO NOT** suggest that unsafe practices are acceptable just because they are family tradition. Unsafe traditions should always be challenged.



### Social Media: *be a safety advocate!*

- Lead by example with safe depictions (visual and text)
- Suggest injury prevention and safety strategies
- Link to approved safety and health resources