Note to editors: A photo to accompany this story is at https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/52356860237

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National Farm Safety and Health Week kicks off Sept. 19

‘Protecting Agriculture’s Future’ marks annual reminder to be safe on the farm

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Agriculture is considered one of the most dangerous occupations in the nation, but safety measures can lower producers' risk of having a serious accident, said a Kansas State University official on farm safety.

Tawnie Larson, the state’s coordinator of the Rollover Protection Structure (ROPS) program at K-State, said several webinars are on tap during the upcoming National Farm Safety and Health Week to serve as reminders on roadway safety; ATV and UTV safety; mental health and suicide prevention; grain bin and confined spaces safety; and more.

The online webinars are available for free from the AgriSafe Network. National Farm Safety and Health Week kicks off on Sept. 19.

“Kansas ag producers and their business partners are not only an important part of our economy in Kansas, but an integral part of our rural communities,” Larson said. “Losing a producer to an accident can affect much more than the operation of the farm; it can take a vital person from a community.”

Larson said agriculture safety focuses on the total health of agricultural workers, including healthy habits like sleep, diet, mental health and safety for the entire family around the farm. She notes it includes safety around equipment (including tractors and ATVs) and on roads; as well as hearing, vision and skin protection and working in the elements – both when it is hot and cold outside.

“Mental health is also important,” Larson said. “Farmers have high levels of stress, which makes the rural suicide rate high. Mental clarity is an important aspect of safety too. It is important that producers and ag workers remain in the moment when doing all tasks.”
Larson said a routine chore can become dangerous, “if we let our minds wander and our regard for safety forgotten.”

She noted that many programs also are available for women, who are taking a larger role in agriculture. Programs include maintaining strong bones, avoiding secondary injury, and working smarter.

“Women don’t have the brute strength of most men, but with thought and proper care, they can get the job done,” Larson said.

“Safety during pregnancy, especially environmental contaminants, is an important practice for women to consider. The National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety recommends a ‘Parent First, Farmer Second’ mindset, which protects the most important thing that a farmer will ever raise -- children. It is important to plan to keep young children out of the worksite and off equipment by creating areas for safe play and planning for childcare.”

Larson said the AgriSafe Network offers programming related to many aspects of health for those working in agriculture, including a podcast titled, Total Farmer Health.

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