

## **Twenty-Seven Farm-Related Fatalities in New York in 2010**

By James J. Carrabba

The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine & Health-NYCAMH

Unfortunately, during 2010, NYCAMH learned of 27 farm-related fatalities that occurred in the state of New York. These are preliminary figures. The 27 farm-related fatalities in 2010 represent a considerable increase from the 14 farm-related fatalities that were identified in 2009. For the years 2006 to 2009, the number of farm fatalities in New York was trending downward with 25 fatalities identified in 2006, 22 fatalities in 2007, 20 fatalities in 2008, and 14 fatalities in 2009. Thus, although the trend has generally been downward, 2010 does serve to remind us how serious the hazards in agriculture can be. NYCAMH gathers these statistics through a news clipping service and from fatality reports distributed from the New York State Department of Health. The New York Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation program (FACE) reports that from 1992 to 2004 there were 287 New York agricultural workers that died while working which is approximately 24 workers killed each year.

Tractor-related incidents were the most common cause of farm-related fatalities in 2010 with thirteen (48%) deaths. Of the thirteen tractor-related deaths, nine were tractor rollovers and four were runover incidents. The other types of fatalities included asphyxiation (3 deaths), machinery entanglements (2 deaths), struck-by incidents (2 deaths), drowning (2 deaths), and then there was one death each in the categories of fire, ATV, motor vehicle, suicide and one farm death with unknown circumstances. The victims ranged in age from one year old to 84 years old. The one year old victim was found drowned in a water trough. The 83 year old victim was found pinned underneath the rear wheel of a tractor. The average age of all the victims was 57 years old.

To protect against tractor rollover deaths, tractors need to be equipped with ROPS (Roll Over Protective Structures) and seatbelts. NYCAMH's New York State ROPS Retrofit Rebate Program has placed ROPS on over 800 tractors in the first four years of the program. Fifty-three program participants have identified situations in which they believe their new ROPS likely prevented a serious incident with potential for injury or fatality. If you have a tractor without ROPS, call the toll-free number 1-877-ROPSR4U, to see if your tractor can be equipped with a ROPS and seatbelt. The program will rebate 70% of the cost of the ROPS up to a maximum of \$765. New York tractor owners are eligible for this program and can retrofit one tractor per year.

In 2010, there were four tractor runover deaths that occurred. The only safe way to start a tractor is by climbing into the operator's seat, and making sure the tractor is in park or neutral and the clutch is depressed. Never attempt to start a tractor while standing on the ground or by performing by-pass starting. Taking that shortcut might cost you your life if the tractor should suddenly jump ahead because it was started while in gear. With ROPS equipped tractors, always use the seatbelt. The seatbelt will keep you in the seat and prevent runover incidents from occurring.

Three victims died by asphyxiation. These incidents included a victim engulfed in a grain bin, a victim buried when a silage face collapsed and one victim died in a tank manure spreader from the manure gasses. Never enter grain bins when they are being unloaded. You can be completely buried in flowing grain within seconds. Never walk up to the face of silage in a bunker silo. The face of the silage can collapse and bury you. Never enter confined spaces in manure handling equipment or manure pits. Always assume that gasses are present. Manure gas can be present in high enough concentrations and you will not be able to see it or smell it and it can kill you quickly. If you see a coworker collapse in a confined space, do not rush in to save them. You could be the next victim. Instead, alert 911 immediately and then ventilate the space with fans or blowers while waiting for help to arrive.

Farm fatalities and injuries are preventable. NYCAMH is always here to help farms with their safety education efforts. We offer our on-farm safety program, on-farm safety surveys or farm safety training sessions for farms in New York. Our on-farm safety surveys identify potential farm hazards around the farmstead, tractor and machinery, and regarding use of personal protective equipment, like hearing and eye protection. Our training programs are farm specific and can be provided in Spanish by Anna Meyerhoff, Bilingual Farm Safety Educator. These services are available at no cost through a grant from the New York State Department of Labor Hazard Abatement Board. Contact me at 800-343-7527 ext 239 or [jcarrabba@nycamh.com](mailto:jcarrabba@nycamh.com) or Anna Meyerhoff ext 291 or [ameyerhoff@nycamh.com](mailto:ameyerhoff@nycamh.com) to schedule these programs or for more information about our services. NYCAMH, a program of Bassett Healthcare Network is enhancing agricultural and rural health by preventing and treating occupational injury and illness.