



13750 S. Sedona Parkway, Ste 5
Lansing, MI 48906

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Contact: Jody Pollok-Newsom
Phone: (517) 668-2676

Taking Time for Safety Leads to a Successful Harvest

LANSING, MICH. – As corn farmers across the nation are pulling into their fields to harvest the third largest crop on record, a predicted 12.5 billion bushel crop, they are reminded to focus not only on filling their bins, but also to follow important safety precautions that could save their lives.

Harvest is one of the highest risk periods for farm injuries or fatalities. According to Michigan Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation statistics, there were 21 agriculture-related fatalities in 2010 in Michigan, which is up from just 11 fatalities in 2009. There is a documented increase in agriculture-related deaths when farm equipment is in the fields.

“As farmers begin harvest this year, we want to remind them that a successful harvest is one in which there are no serious injuries or fatalities and everyone remains safe,” said Jody Pollok-Newsom, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) executive director. “Harvest is a very important time for farmers. With equipment on the roads and in the fields, it is vital for everyone to remember to take proper safety precautions.”

Preventing accidents is the first step towards a safe harvest. The National Safety Council makes these safety recommendations:

- Inspect all harvest equipment, make sure shields and guards are in place and that the seatbelt works properly if applicable.
- Never lean or step over a power takeoff (PTO) shaft while it is operating.
- Do not wear loose-fitting clothing around PTO shafts or other moving parts.
- Keep long hair tied back or under a cap.
- Check fire extinguishers and smoke detectors to ensure they are working properly.
- Remind all farm employees about farm safety and ensure they have had all appropriate training.
- Keep bystanders and others away from all equipment during operation.
- Follow all safety guidelines set by the equipment manufacturers.

“We realize what a hectic time of year this is for all farmers,” added Pollok-Newsom. “A farmer’s annual income is dependent on harvest, so it is important they remove all their crops from the fields in a timely and productive fashion. They are then able to market their crops or fulfill any contracts they have made prior to harvest, which sets the financial tone for the rest of the year. Harvest is a vital time for farmers and we need to make sure our farmers take time to slow down and ensure it is a safe harvest, which is most important of all.”

Headquartered in Lansing, the CMPM is a legislatively-established statewide program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold. Investments are made in the areas of research, education, market development, and new uses in an effort to enhance the economic position of Michigan corn farmers. The CMPM works cooperatively with the Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA), a grassroots-membership association representing the state’s corn grower’s political interests since the 1970’s. Michigan’s corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state’s economy annually and in 2009, Michigan’s corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of more than 309 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.

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