

Farm hazards a serious threat to kids, study finds

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Injuries often severe, usually not work-related, researchers say.

(HealthDay) -- Almost 27,000 children are injured on farms in the United States each year, and many require hospitalization, according to a new study.

Many of these serious, sometimes fatal, injuries are caused by agricultural industrial hazards, such as falls from tractors or machinery accidents, the researchers report.

"To address this serious problem, prevention should focus on better controlling both child access to agricultural recreational activities and child assignment to agricultural work tasks that exceed developmental norms," said lead researcher Eduard Zaloshnja from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Beltsville, Md.

"This study finds that, similarly to adult agricultural injuries, youth

agricultural injuries tend to be more severe and more costly than non-agricultural injuries," Zaloshnja added.

The report, scheduled for print publication in the April issue of *Pediatrics*, was published online March 12.

To gauge the extent and cost of the problem, Zaloshnja's team combed the U.S. Childhood Agricultural [Injury](#) Survey and Multiple Cause of Death data for 2001 to 2006.

Of about 26,650 kids ages 19 and under injured annually, 14 percent were hospitalized, and 84 died on average each year. By comparison, just over 1 percent of non-farm-related children's injuries warrant hospital care, the study said.

"These injuries cost society an estimated \$1.4 billion per year in 2005 dollars," Zaloshnja said. "Work-related injuries annually cost \$347 million or 24.4 percent of the total cost."

But most of the children's farm accidents (about 71 percent) and fatalities (86 percent) weren't work-related, which suggests a need to better supervise and better educate kids in farm areas, the authors noted.

Dr. Judy Schaechter, an associate professor of pediatrics and adolescent medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, said the study shows that kids are seriously hurt on farms in great number and at great cost.

The high rate of non-work-related accidents "draws attention to the fact that prevention must go beyond the needs of adolescent agricultural workers alone," she said.

"We need to work with farm owners, agricultural industry operators and

employees bringing their children to work regularly or even infrequently because they cannot find child care on a weekend, a teacher-planning day or when a child is sick," she said. "Those kids also deserve serious 'sunlight' in terms of injury prevention."

Also, the findings are consistent with other injury studies that show a far higher proportion of non-fatal injuries than fatal, Schaechter said, noting that the small number of fatalities sometimes gets ignored. "Ironically, that small number has a very high economic cost," she added.

Better analysis of the dangers kids face on farms is needed, Schaechter said. "Open air and nature have great virtue, but there are specific risks to agriculture brought on by specific and heavy equipment, chemicals used, bodies of water, etcetera, as well as degree of parental supervision," she said. "Analysis of such risk can lead to appropriate prevention strategies."

More information: For more about kids' injuries, visit [Safe Kids U.S.A.](#)

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