

Quad Bikes continue to dominate farm deaths

Figures released today by the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety emphasize the importance of having a focus on safety within agriculture. An analysis of Australian media reports in the first nine months of 2017 indicates that 45 people have tragically lost their lives in on-farm incidents and a further 144 have been involved in non-fatal incidents that were serious enough to make the media.

“These death figures are slightly lower than the same time last year” said Centre Director Dr Tony Lower. “However, while that is tragic in itself the figures are only a very small part of the issue, as behind every one of these cases there is an individual, a family and a community that has to manage the unnecessary loss of a loved one or friend in the case of a death. Or for many of those that are injured and survive, they need to learn to manage with lifelong disabling injuries.”

“The consequences are far reaching for everyone concerned and yet we know that the vast majority of cases could be prevented” stated Lower.

Among the deaths, quads and tractors are the leading causes with 10 and eight on-farm fatalities respectively in the period, with trucks and other on-farm machinery also featuring commonly. There has also been six fatalities involving children, two of which were related to quad bikes (one adult/one child-sized).

“While quad manufacturers always point to rider error to avoid any implications regarding the safety of their product, with over 60% of deaths in Australia involving rollovers, the lack of a lateral stability standard and crush protection means not only do they roll all too easily, but when they do, the consequences are often fatal. Because of these design flaws, the margin of error for riding quads is so small that it all too often ends in tragedy.”

“We strongly encourage farmers to use other safer vehicles or if continuing to use a quad, then to ensure a crush protection device is fitted, wear a helmet and follow basic riding safety practices.”

“We know that there are highly effective ways to control the risks and prevent these needless deaths and injuries. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but we need to take these steps before issues arise. In this way we will not only save lives and serious injuries, but the industry we will also be more productive. For all farms but particularly those involved in grain production with harvest periods ahead, we urge the utmost attention to detail to ensure safety.”

A copy of the report and a wide range of materials that can assist those that work and live on farms to reduce the risks to themselves, farm workers, family members and visitors, is available from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety web site www.aghealth.org.au on 0428 549 474 for further information.

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