



Media Guide to Communicating Farm Safety

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the United States, and so it is crucial that the mass media contribute positive farm safety messages. Convey safe farm practices not just with words, but with visual accuracy. Visual errors can actually negate the verbal message and reinforce unsafe farming practices. One wrong picture can undo a thousand words!

The following guidelines give editors, illustrators, cinematographers and photographers a list of positive safety steps to safeguard against communicating incorrect farm safety messages. They are not meant to cover all the possibilities; therefore, when in doubt, please ASK farm safety experts, state extension specialists, or county extension educators.

Guidelines created by the United States Department of Agriculture: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

Guidelines for “Safe” Safety Communication

DO... show tractors and other farm equipment being maintained and operated safely.

- Tractors should have rollover protection structures (ROPS).
- If slow moving farm equipment is shown being operated on a public road, be sure it has a properly mounted SMV emblem and front and rear lighting that is clean and in working order.
- The vehicle must be operated at a reasonable speed, by an adult wearing a seat belt.

DO NOT... show individuals of any age riding in or on tractors, wagons or the backs of pickup trucks; stepping over a rotating shaft; leaning over a conveyer; hand-feeding materials into machines with moving parts or blades; climbing to heights without fall protection, stair or platform guarding; or using augers/ladders near power lines.

DO... portray farm workers in proper clothing and personal protective equipment for the job.

- When showing farm workers with machinery, be sure they are not wearing items that could become entangled in moving machine parts; i.e., jewelry, drawstrings, bandannas, ties or loose clothing.
- Farm workers using all-terrain vehicles should be depicted wearing helmets, goggles, pants, work boots, gloves and long sleeves.
- Workers handling hay, grain or silage inside structures should be shown wearing dust masks.
- Show farm workers mixing or applying chemicals in proper clothing and personal protective equipment, according to whether the chemical is in concentrated or diluted form (see chemical label recommendations).

DO... show children playing in fenced areas and performing supervised, age-appropriate chores.

- Photos of children handling and feeding newborn or small animals is a sure way to catch the public’s attention. However, children being photographed may also draw the unwanted attention of adult animals who can be dangerously protective of their offspring.

DO NOT... place children in risky situations for the sake of a story. Always isolate the babies from the adult animals during filming and never show children playing in grain piles, wagons or bins.

DO... project positive images, in words and pictures.

- When writing about children, write of normal activities and chores appropriate to the age(s) of the children.
- Remember: unusual responsibility may be admirable in advanced youngsters, but consider what is unsafe for the average child.

DO NOT... show children under 14 driving any motorized farm vehicle, or riding, climbing, standing, or playing on farm machinery.

Do... cover positive stories on adult and youth groups involved in safety workshops and projects.

- Frame photos to exclude any potential safety hazard that is impossible to eliminate physically.
- Try to include visible safety measures around the farm within overall shots; i.e., smoke alarms and fire extinguisher mounted prominently in barns, sheds and other outbuildings.
- Photograph areas free of clutter; show clean, obviously well-maintained machinery and equipment. Dirt, clutter and rust could imply carelessness.
- Locate agricultural businesses in your community that have excellent safety records. Detail their safety programs and provide graphic illustrations of accident/cost reduction ratios.

Do... cover positive stories on adult and youth groups involved in safety workshops and projects.

- Contrasting bad images that illustrate what not to do is, of course, an effective means of making a positive point. If you use this method, be sure the wrong way message is clearly and frequently stated, followed immediately with a strong verbal or visual image of the right way.