

# Farm First Aid – Preparing for tough situations

Casper Bendixsen and Kate Barnes for *Progressive Dairyman*

## AT A GLANCE

Preparing farmers, families and workers for on-farm emergencies can be an effective way of thinking how to prevent them in the first place.

Responding appropriately to agricultural emergencies requires a specialized skill set. Evidence suggests the more exposure emergency responders have to agricultural situations, the more comfortable they will become when dealing with safety issues in those environments.

The Rural Firefighters Delivering Agricultural Safety and Health (RF-DASH) project's Farm First Aid programming has been tried and tested at Penn State University Extension.

In Pennsylvania, the Farm Rescue Training program for emergency responders is referred to as the PAgricultural Rescue Program. Since 2001, it has trained over 3,000 emergency responders statewide. The Farm Rescue Training model consists

of 118 hours of training opportunities delivered through 10 modules, including awareness, operations and technical level training programs. Six of these modules have been packaged under three separate offerings that have received approval from the Department of Homeland Security. These three programs are the only Homeland Security-approved trainings in the country dealing specifically with agricultural rescue training.

Several documented cases have been received from Pennsylvania fire companies citing the PAgricultural Rescue Training in successful rescues. While the RF-DASH project does not intend to do this level of training, this prior success indicates the team will have the necessary experience to work with emergency response organizations in a successful manner.

The Farm Family Emergency

Response Program (FFERP) teaches farm family members and employees critical actions to employ – as well as avoid – when they discover an emergency incident on the farm. As a supplemental program to FFERP, the Emergency First Aid Care for Farm Families teaches patient care (first aid) skills to farm families and employees so they can assist injured people while they are waiting for emergency responders to arrive on the scene. An instructor tutorial for the FFERP was also developed.

In addition, RF-DASH Farm First Aid will explicitly deploy first aid skills within farm scenarios recognizable to the region's farming community. The appropriate prevention tactic will be disseminated at the conclusion of each first aid scenario. Thus, participants will be made hyperaware of harm and injury but then given a

means to handle the emergency and, ideally, prevent the injury. Ongoing social network analysis will help identify characteristics unique to the region's agriculture as well as guide the refinement of the curriculum to garner acceptance from instructors and trainees.

A goal of this project is to engage rural emergency responders to help farmers identify and acknowledge hazards on their farms that can cause injury and death, and to teach farmers, farm family members and farm employees proper actions to take when injury emergencies happen on the farm. Emergency responders are in a most unique position to help farmers in this way because they can discuss with farmers the medical/trauma consequences of their exposure to the hazards on the farm. With this knowledge, farm members will be more receptive to understanding and

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*This training allows fire and EMS to show participants the hazards on a farm, how to deal with an incident, and most importantly, how it could have been prevented.*



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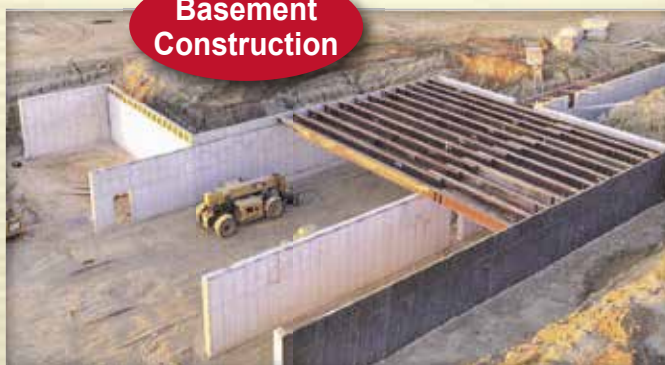
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adopting strategies to prevent injury emergencies.

We encourage farmers and fire departments to learn more about farm first aid. If you are involved in your fire department, please inquire about being trained in the RF-DASH curriculum by emailing Casper Bendixsen. 🐾

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

The average response time for rural emergencies (fire or medical) are often double that of urban communities.

Averages can vary from

**15 to 26 minutes.**

SOURCE: NEJM Journal Watch – Emergency Medicine 2017

Issue 16 of *Progressive Dairyman* (Oct. 1, 2017) highlighted the Rural Firefighters Delivering Agricultural Safety and Health (RF-DASH) project from the National Farm Medicine Center. This project encourages rural emergency responders to work with farmers and farm managers to help prevent farm injuries and fatalities by engaging in a four-part curriculum. In Issue 17 (Oct. 19, 2017), we highlighted the program's features meant to help protect first responders during

farm emergencies and expedite their response, specifically through pre-planning and using tools like FarmMapper. In Issue 18 (Nov. 7, 2017), we highlighted the program's features meant to help fire and emergency medical services analyze hazards on farms and report them to the owner-operator. This issue highlights the importance of first aid, with emphasis on encouraging farm owners to mitigate the hazards before emergency services are necessary.

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