

UMASH

**Upper Midwest
Agricultural Safety
and Health Center**

**University of Minnesota School of Public Health
University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
National Farm Medicine Center
Minnesota Department of Health**

Laying a new foundation for engaging agricultural media gatekeepers in covering safety and health

Scott Heiberger, Communications Specialist, National Farm Medicine Center

International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health

June 23, 2014

Omaha, Nebraska

NIOSH sub-award 2013-05177-01 (AA617)



Team



**University of Illinois – Agricultural Communications Documentation Center
National Farm Medicine Center**



Background

Agricultural print periodicals are important information sources for:

- Farmers
- Agents of influence within agriculture (e.g., bankers, insurers, advertisers)



Background – cont'd

82 percent!

-- Media Channel Study



Question

How can we facilitate expanded and innovative coverage of agricultural safety and health by ag media?



Methods

- 1) Literature Review
- 2) Ag Comm. Teacher Survey
- 3) Content Review
- 4) Ag Journalists Survey



Content Review

Objective: Examine amount and nature of safety-related ag media coverage vs. other hazardous industries.



Content Review – cont'd

Methods

Agriculture (9)	Transportation/Mining (9)
AgWeek	American Trucker
American Vegetable Grower	Material Handling & Product
Beef	Motor Age
Corn and Soybean Digest	Professional Distributor
Cotton Grower	Railway Age
Farm Industry News	Roads and Bridges
Florida Grower	Commuter/Regional Air News
Western Farm Press	Mining World
Western Fruit Grower	Coal Age

UI Library databases, 2008-12



Content Review – cont'd

Results

528 articles

Safety articles per periodical – 5-year avg.

- Mining -- 50
- Transportation -- 35.6
- Agriculture -- 17.9



Content Review – cont'd

Results

Safety tips and statistics in articles

	Agriculture	Transportation	Mining
Tips included	<u>47.9%</u>	19.1%	11.3%
Statistics included	<u>33.6%</u>	16.0%	14.2%



Journalists Survey

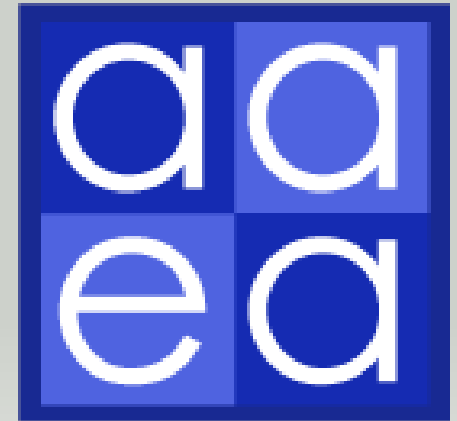
Objective: Assess attitudes of ag journalists toward occupational safety coverage, their sources of safety knowledge and preferred methods of accessing safety knowledge.



Journalists Survey

Methods

- Identified 150 editors and reporters through American Agricultural Editors Association membership list.
- 17-question survey using REDcap; Likert scale, check-all-that-apply, comments.



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

Respondents' profile

- At least 10 years' experience – 93 %
- Age 40 and older - 78 %
- Male - 56 %



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

- 41/150 completed questionnaires (response rate 27 percent).
- 40/41 consider ag safety to be “important” or “somewhat important.”
- **Readership surveys indicate low interest in safety articles.**



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

- Accidents or fatalities “hit home” with readers.
- “Prevention is important, but attention spans are more attuned with a real incident.”
- 73 percent stated that they or a close family member had experienced a “close call” doing farm work.



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

- “We should do more to make farmers **uncomfortable** about safety issues.”
- “Tough topic to cover. Readers skip over things that make them uncomfortable or make them cringe. Yet they are oddly attracted to it.”



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

Sources of safety information

- University specialists/educators – 88 %
- Farm safety organizations – 78%
- Farm associations – 59%
- USDA/other federal, state agencies – 56%



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

Desired types of safety information

- Statistics on agricultural injury – 93%
- Contact lists of safety experts – 85%
- Death/injury reviews – 66%
- Email alerts to safety-related articles – 63%
- Public service advertisements – 20%



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

What factor is most important in creating a safer ag work environment?

- Industry-endorsed best practices - 51%
- Better design of equipment, buildings - 37%
- Safety regulations on farms - 12%



Journalists Survey – cont'd

Results

- “Interesting survey. I have never taken a survey on safety before. I think there could be much more discussion and articles on the subject.”
- “Your survey made me realize we need to cover cattle-related injuries much more than we do.”
- “Safety articles are important not only for the information they deliver but because they illustrate the publication’s interest in the reader as a whole person.”



Summary

- Preliminary results of this pilot indicate that ag journalists and ag communications teachers value safety, and they desire enhanced and better-targeted resources and tools for communicating safety.
- The content analysis is providing a unique perspective on the amount and nature of ag safety coverage in comparison with media coverage of two other high-risk industries.
- The journalists survey and literature review are identifying pitfalls, gaps and promising opportunities for engaging agricultural media more effectively.



Next steps?

