

Contact: Matt DePoint, Academic Health Center, 612-625-4110, mdepoint@umn.edu
Miranda Taylor, Academic Health Center, 612-626-2767, tayl0551@umn.edu

University of Minnesota, other US agriculture centers ready for National Farm Safety and Health Week

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL (September 18, 2014) – The University of Minnesota’s [Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center](#) (UMASH) along with the nine other U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers funded by the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#) (NIOSH) encourage everyone involved in the agriculture industry to recognize National Farm Safety and Health Week (September 21-27) and promote awareness of safety solutions year round. This year’s theme for National Farm Safety and Health week is [“Safety Counts: Protecting What Matters.”](#)

“Agriculture is a vital industry and we all rely on the food produced by people working in this industry. As the industry expands and modernizes to meet a growing global demand for food, the health and wellbeing of the people who produce the food should be of great importance,” said [Bruce Alexander, Ph.D.](#), professor of environmental health sciences at the University of Minnesota [School of Public Health](#) and director of UMASH. “Agriculture can be a hazardous occupation, but there are ways to reduce potential hazards when risks are well understood and controlled.”

UMASH has six ongoing primary projects addressing health and safety issues in the dairy and pork industries. They include: 1) improving the health and safety training of new immigrant workers 2) zoonotic disease surveillance in ag workers and their families 3) improvement of pork industry production practice and worker health and safety 4) improving the scientific basis for understanding how livestock associated methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) affects people, 5) helping injured workers get back to work, and 6) a program to address known and emerging health and safety issues.

The ten U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers, including UMASH, are distributed throughout the nation as a way to respond to the agricultural safety and health issues unique to individual areas. Together they launched a [YouTube channel](#) with safety videos on a range of topics related to agriculture. This channel makes agricultural safety videos easily available to University of Minnesota Extension agents and educators, agricultural science teachers, producers, owner, operators, first responders and agricultural families.

The Ag Centers were established by Congress in 1990 in response to evidence that agricultural workers were suffering substantially higher rates of occupational injury and illness than other U.S. workers.

“UMASH is dedicated to working with people in agriculture to meet the challenge of maintaining a healthy, safe, and productive workforce. The wellbeing of the people who supply our food is everyone’s business,” Alexander said.

UMASH is a collaboration between the U of M School of Public Health, U of M College of Veterinary Medicine, Minnesota Department of Health and the Marshfield clinic. UMASH brings together the fields of human public health and medicine together with veterinary medicine in a model known as One Health.

For more information on National Farm Safety and Health Week, and safety resources, visit the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety [website](#) or visit the U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers’ [YouTube channel](#).