

2019 Wisconsin Farm Related Fatalities

A COLLABORATION OF UW DIVISION OF EXTENSION AND THE NATIONAL FARM MEDICINE CENTER

INTRODUCTION

Annual summaries of farm fatalities help identify the hazards and risks associated with production agriculture. This report includes fatalities resulting from encounters with agriculture-related hazards. Fatalities resulting from naturally occurring health events or underlying conditions (e.g. heart attack, stroke), recreational activities, or home-related activities are not included in this summary. Due to time and resource limitations, this report had been discontinued from 2007-16.

Year	2005	2006	2017	2018	2019
Fatalities	30	25	41	34	40

NOTE: Since 2017, farm fatality reports differ from BLS data summaries due to the inclusion of children, bystanders, non-farm motorists, and other public roadway incidents involving agricultural operations.

TYPES OF FATALITIES

Forty fatalities were recorded in 2019. The table below categorizes fatalities using the **Farm and Agricultural Injury Classification (FAIC)**.¹ FAIC codes allow us to identify occupational cases and unique exposures, such as non-working children and other bystanders injured while in work environments.

Injury Classification	Number
Farm Production Work	16
Agricultural Support (e.g. farm mechanic)	1
Farm Hazard: Non-workers	10
Roadway Collision	6
Undeterminable	7

EVENTS THAT LED TO FARM FATALITIES

Farm equipment conditions and the presence of safety devices vary greatly, but even with seemingly “safe” equipment, unexpected events and improper operation can lead to injury. Transportation activities, such as operating a tractor in a field or on the roadway, led to 17 fatalities in 2019. This includes civilians injured in collisions with ag-related vehicles. Eleven of these fatalities occurred off the roadway, such as fields or driveways. Blunt trauma, such as falling equipment/trees or run-overs, caused 8 fatalities. Machinery entanglements on moving parts, such as with power take offs, caused 4 fatalities. Four other fatal injuries were caused by falls from farm structures, three of which involved snow removal.

Injury Event	Number
Off-road Transportation	11
On-road Transportation	6
Machine entanglements	4
Blunt Trauma	8
Falls	4
Fire/Explosion	3

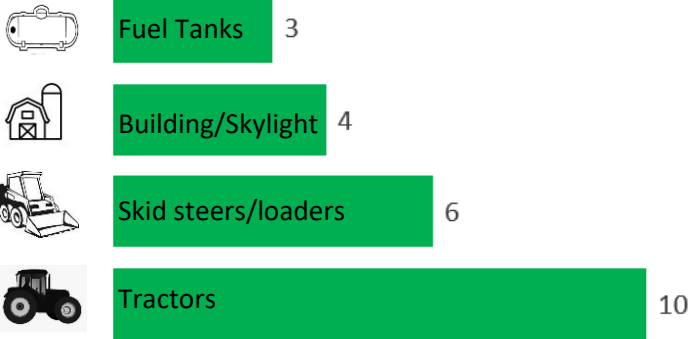
It is also important to note how these transportation events caused fatalities. Within these cases, 8 (53%) involved tractors; 3 involved ATVs/UTVs and 3 involved skid steers/loaders (20%).

AREAS OF INTEREST

The high number of falls from farm structures is of concern. Even a fall from a lower height (as little as 4-6 feet) can cause a fatal or disabling injury. We have had several recent winters where snow removal from building roofs was necessary, leading to increased risk. Snow removal and roof repair/installation work should be done by professionals with proper safety equipment and experience. Roadway collisions remain a major area of concern in Wisconsin. Operators should use all available lighting and marking regardless of the time of day. This includes turn signals, flashing amber lights, reflectors, head/tail lights, reflective tape, and a visible slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem. The state should also consider upgrading lighting and marking requirements to better align with ASABE safety standards and federal requirements. Preventable youth fatalities on Wisconsin farms were also a major concern in 2019. All of the identified youth fatalities in this year were the result of run-overs by skid steers/loaders (n= 3) or other agricultural equipment (n= 3). Five of these were non-working youth under the age of 9.

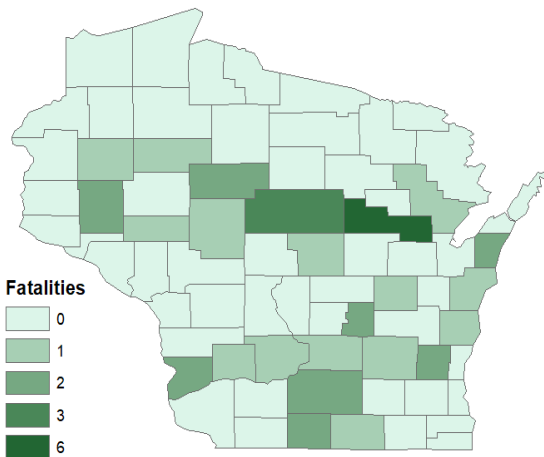
SOURCES OF FATAL INJURY

Farms have multiple hazards that can contribute to injury. Both farm and passenger vehicles can pose a threat to farmers or to non-farm vehicle operators and passengers. Collisions involving passenger vehicles fatally injured 9 victims while tractor incidents fatally injured 5. Falling trees and logs, such as clearing trees from a farm fencerow with a tractor, fatally injured 3 victims. Additionally, animals, such as bulls or horses, fatally injured 2 victims.



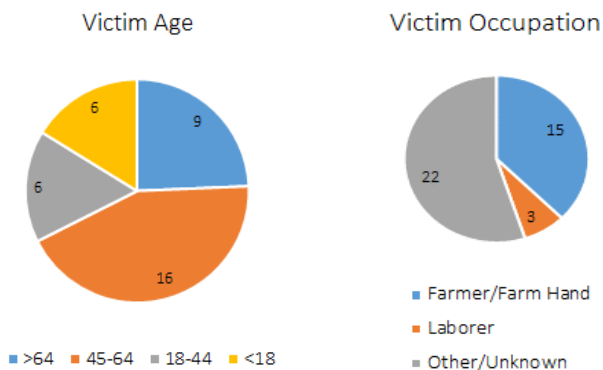
INJURY LOCATIONS

This map shows the counties with 2019 farm fatalities.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Thirty-five of the victims were male and five were female. Persons aged 45-64 constituted the largest number of victims with 18 individuals. Notably, 6 victims were youth under the age of 18, 5 of which were under the age of 9. Of the victims with known occupations, 12 were primarily farmers. Outside of farming occupations, victims included three general laborers plus a mix of various other professions.



OTHER CASES

Skid steers have become quite common on Wisconsin farms, yet are potentially dangerous. Skid steer operators must be experienced and have knowledge of equipment safety features. Operators must also be aware of their surroundings including the presence of workers, children, and bystanders. Unfortunately, we often see youth involved in preventable skid steer incidents.

Note: The authors of this factsheet documented several suicide events involving those reported as farmers. These events are not included in the data described here, but have been recently summarized in a separate report.² If you have concerns for yourself or others including thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-273-8255, and also consider locating a "QPR" suicide prevention training course in your community.

IMPACT OF FARM FATALITIES

Nationally, workers in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (AgFF) are up to 8 times more likely to die on the job than workers in other industries.³ Farming remains among the most dangerous jobs in the U.S. with an annual fatality rate of 26.0/100,000 persons compared to 3.3/100,000 persons overall.³ When last examined by Leigh et al. in 2001, the cost of farm-related injuries nationally averaged an estimated \$4.57 billion/year. This represents a contribution of 30% more than the national average to occupational injury costs.⁴

ABOUT OUR DATA

Data sources included Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Bureau of Health Information death certificate registry; clippings from Wisconsin daily and weekly newspapers collected and collated via AgInjuryNews.org.

Previous Wisconsin Farm-Related Fatality reports and other safety materials can be found at: agsafety.wisc.edu/topics/fatality-reports/

REFERENCES

1. DJ Murphy, M Purschwitz, B S Mahoney, and A F Hoskin Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Pennsylvania State University, University Park 16802. "A proposed classification code for farm and agricultural injuries.", *American Journal of Public Health* 83, no. 5 (May 1, 1993): pp. 736-738.
2. Weichelt, B.; Burke, R.; Redmond, E.; Shutske, J. Farm Suicides in Wisconsin, 2017–2018: Preliminary Findings and a Call for Future Research. *Safety* 2021, 7, 51. <https://doi.org/10.3390/safety7030051>
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4. Leigh JP, McCurdy SA, Schenker MB. Costs of occupational injuries in agriculture. *Public Health Rep.* 2001;116(3):235-248. doi:10.1093/phr/116.3.235

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