



AgHealth News

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First WCAHS Outstanding Achievement in Farm Health & Safety awarded

The Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety honored two farm organizations for outstanding safety achievement at an award ceremony on Sept. 19, held in Calistoga, Calif. WCAHS' first Outstanding Achievement in Farm Health and Safety Recognition Award was presented to the Sacramento County Farm Bureau in honor of its exceptional farmworker safety training programs and involvement in promoting practices not only on the farm, but within communities through health fairs that reach farm workers, their families, and children. An honorable mention certificate was awarded to the Silverado Farming Company of Napa, Calif., for its on-going employee training and education, extraordinary employee benefits and community outreach.

The WCAHS Farm Health and Safety Award was developed to recognize an individual, group, organization, association or business that consistently strives to reduce agricultural workplace injuries and improve overall health on the farm and in their communities.

The recognition award, accompanied by a \$1,000 prize donated by the Western Growers Association, was accepted by Charlotte Mitchell, executive director of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau. Pete Richmond, founder and president of Silverado Farming, along with partners

(see **Award** on page 3)



Charles E. Hess (left), dean-emeritus of the UC Davis College of Agriculture and award planning committee chair, pauses for a photo with Charlotte Mitchell, executive director of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau, and Dr. Marc Schenker, WCAHS director. The Sacramento County Farm Bureau was selected to receive WCAHS' first Outstanding Achievement in Farm Health and Safety Award.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Immigrant Farmworkers—Tip of the Iceberg

By Marc Schenker, M.D., MPH

Mounting evidence indicates that immigrant employees are at increased risk for serious and all too often fatal work-related injuries and illnesses. Agriculture employs the largest percentage of immigrant workers, but the absolute number of immigrant workers is greater in other industries such as construction, where the same phenomena is observed. In other words, agriculture is the tip of this iceberg.

The federal government's Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries shows a 25 percent decline in the rate of fatal work injuries over the past 15 years, but the number and rate of fatal injuries among foreign-born Hispanics has actually increased during this time. An analysis of occupational fatalities in 2006 by specific industries reveals work-related fatality rates totaling 29.2 (per 100,000 employed) for farming, fishing and forestry, 16.5 for transportation, and 13.2 for

(see **Commentary** page 4)

Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program Branches out to the Central Valley

By Teresa Andrews

Sept. 3, 2008, was a special day for 25 workers in California's Central Valley. After three once-a-week, eight-hour days of training, the participants received their certificates of completion as Worker Occupational Safety and Health (WOSH) Specialists. The main goal of the training, hosted by the city of Manteca, was to increase worker capacity to take leadership roles in promoting health and safety in their workplaces. The topics covered during the training were: Workplace Injury and Illness Prevention, Identifying and Controlling Hazards, Safety Rights and Responsibilities, Workers' Compensation, Cal/OSHA regulations, Strategies for Taking Action, Preventing Workplace Violence, Health and Safety Committees, Ergonomics and the roles a WOSH Specialist can play in reducing workplace injury and illness rates.

Throughout the training, the energy of the group filled the room as they engaged in discussions, role plays and other activities that made the hours pass quickly. The diversity of the participants, including their years of experience and areas of expertise, contributed to enriching their knowledge as they exchanged real-life experiences and new ideas for improving health and safety in their workplaces. In addition to their certificate of completion, each participant received an ID card, recognizing them as new WOSH Specialists.



WCAHS' Education/Outreach Specialist Teresa Andrews works with participants of the Worker Occupational Safety and Health (WOSH) Specialists training in September.



The WOSH Specialist program is one of the projects under the Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP) – an exciting statewide initiative aimed at reducing occupational injuries and illnesses and workers' compensation costs in California workplaces. The program was created under Labor Code Section 6354.7 in 2002 as part of workers' compensation reform, and it is coordinated by the Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation. The program is implemented by resource centers at the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley, the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program at UCLA and, starting in 2008, the Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (WCAHS) at UC Davis.

In addition to providing WOSH Specialist courses, the expansion of WOSHTEP to the Central Valley includes the creation of new educational resources for employers on the health and safety hazards in specific agricultural industries. These materials include suggestions for how to involve their employees in health and safety promotion efforts. The high rate of injury, illness and death among California's agricultural workers makes WOSHTEP an important initiative. WCAHS' relationship with diverse stakeholders in the agricultural industry in the Central Valley will be key to the success of these efforts.

For more information on WCAHS' involvement in the WOSH Training and Education Program, please contact Teresa Andrews at (530) 754-8678 or terandrews@ucdavis.edu.



NORA Symposium 2008: Public Market for Ideas and Partnerships

The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), is a NIOSH partnership program developed in 1996 to stimulate innovative research and improved workplace practices. Participation in NORA is broad, including stakeholders from universities, large and small businesses, professional societies, government agencies, and worker organizations.

“NORA Symposium 2008: Public Market for Ideas and Partnerships” was held in Denver on July 29, 2008. The Denver symposium was held in conjunction with a parallel NORA virtual conference on the Internet. The Symposium provided an open forum to facilitate effective communication about the importance of past and future work and opportunities for collaboration and partnerships to achieve impact in the workplace. Attending from UC Davis were WCAHS Director Marc Schenker and Center Manager Sandy Freeland.



AgFF sector council leaders and strategic planning workshop co-chairs: George Conway, M.D., MPH, NIOSH Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AgFF) Program and chief, Alaska Field Station; and Barbara C. Lee, R.N., Ph.D., director of the National Farm Medicine Center, Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation

A highlight of the symposium was the keynote address, titled “NORA at Twelve: Transcultural Occupational Safety and Health,” by out-going NIOSH Director John Howard, M.D., MPH, J.D., LLM, who received a standing ovation for the

content of his address and his years of outstanding directorship. The 2006 NORA Innovation Research Award recipient, Thomas A. Arcury, Ph.D., provided an update on “Reducing the Impact of Green Tobacco Sickness among Latino Farmworkers.”

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Arnulfo Solario and Stan Zervas accepted the honorable mention award. The award reception, held at the Clos Pegase Winery in Calistoga, was sponsored by the Zenith Workers Compensation Insurance Company. In attendance for the presentation were Stuart Presson, vice president, and Kevin Reeves, territorial manager.

Annually, the Sacramento County Farm Bureau hosts a major safety seminar for farm workers, employers and supervisors, with classes offered in Spanish and English. In recent years, the organization also has expanded its activities to include a health fair for families, providing free medical testing and basic health training.

Hank Giclas, vice president of science and technology, said,

“Western Growers is proud to have the opportunity to collaborate with the Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety to present the first ever Outstanding Achievement in Agricultural Health and Safety Award. We wholeheartedly support the center’s mission and efforts to reduce agricultural injury and illness through focused research, education and intervention, and believe that this award, which recognizes exemplary efforts to improve health and safety on the farm, helps us all to foster a culture that reduces workplace injury and improves overall health.”

Nominations for next year’s Outstanding Achievement in Farm Health and Safety Recognition Award will begin in January. For more information, contact Sandy Freeland

PTO Safety Interactive Training Now on NASD

The National Ag Safety Database (NASD), a central repository of health, safety and injury prevention materials for the agricultural community, is offering an interactive training site. The first interactive module is on PTO safety. Additional modules are in the works for the coming year. To access the new PTO interactive training, visit www.nasdrtraining.org.

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construction. These rates compare to 3.9 for all workers.

Non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses also are higher among immigrant workers. Hispanics comprise 10.2 percent of the U.S. workforce, but account for 17.1 percent of occupational injuries and illnesses. Injured immigrant workers in the United States also have greater disability from occupational injuries than do non-immigrant workers.

Immigrant day laborers have injury rates 50 to 100 percent higher than the rate for non-immigrant day laborers, and workers' compensation is generally available for less than half of injured immigrant workers.

Agricultural workers, most of whom are Hispanic immigrants, have

increased fatal and non-fatal injury rates, and occupational fatalities are higher among Hispanic construction workers.

Why are the injury and death rates dramatically higher among immigrants? One explanation is that the three U.S. industries—agriculture, construction and transportation—employing the greatest percentage of Hispanic workers have the highest rates of occupational fatalities. An additional explanation relates to the “precarious employment” of immigrants. Their poverty, lack of job security and fear of deportation prevent them from complaining about unsafe working conditions and increase their risks in other ways.

Immigration is an enormous and growing global phenomenon, with

an estimated 200 million people around the world now living outside their country of origin. Most are economic migrants, doing jobs that the native-born population won't do, even if the birthrate was generating enough young workers, which it isn't.

Regulations and conventions exist to protect all workers in the form of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, and the 2003 United Nation's International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

What is needed now is the political and societal will to enforce these rules as we acknowledge that a safe and healthy workplace is the birthright of all workers, regardless of their immigration status.

Perhaps it is time to update the biblical saying to *convert swords into plowshares* by converting *immigration agents into health and safety inspectors*. At a minimum, we need to remove the “exceptionalism” that has existed in agriculture with regard to health and safety.

The same rules and guarantees of a safe and healthy workplace that exist for traditional industries should apply to all workplaces, including agriculture. We also need to provide the benefits of a safe and healthy workplace to all (agricultural) workers, not just those who are born in this country or are here through legal work programs. This country is certainly in desperate need of fixing the immigration mess, but the workers caught up in this should not be made the victims of the politicians' failure to act.

Marc Schenker, M.D., MPH, is director of WCAHS and a professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences, University of California, Davis



On July 28, the day before the NORA Symposium 2008, the NIOSH agricultural center directors met in Colorado. From Left: Murray Madsen, Great Plains Center/Iowa; Matt Keifer, Pacific Northwest Center/Seattle; Bob McKnight, Southeast Center/Kentucky; Marc Schenker, Western Center/UC Davis; Barb Lee, National Children's Center/Marshfield, WI; W. Allen Robison, Extramural Programs, NIOSH-Atlanta Office; Jeff Levin, Southwest Center/Texas; Steve Reynolds & Vicky Buchan, High Plains Center/Colorado.



Migration and Health Public Policy Forum in Zacatecas, Mexico

By Teresa Andrews

In early October, a group of six UC Davis faculty, staff and students, proudly represented UC Davis at the Migration and Health Public Policy Forum organized by the Health Initiative of the Americas and hosted by the Government of the Mexican state of Zacatecas.

This event was part of the VIII Binational Health Week (BHW), one of the biggest social mobilizations working to improve the health of vulnerable migrant populations of Latin-American origin living in the United States.

BHW is a transnational strategy of collaboration and cooperation among 10 countries located in Central, North and South America; aiming to improve the health of migrant workers and their families. Almost 300 agencies, including universities, foundations, private agencies, government agencies and religious groups are part of this effort.

During three intensive days, participants had the opportunity to network and exchange ideas, best practices, experiences and perspectives on the health challenges faced by people moving across countries. Among the topics discussed were health and safety in the work place; at-risk groups, including women and children; mental health; emergency preparedness; Latin-American health in the context of migration; migration and health research, including areas that need strengthening; and health needs from a migrant perspective.

Despite our differences in age, language, education and country of origin, participants were united by

the desire to work together in reducing health disparities and increase cultural understanding.

As the WCAHS group mingled with representatives from Mexico, Canada, El Salvador, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and other groups from the United States, they realized the many challenges, but found that numerous people and institutions are willing to work together to find innovative solutions.

Thanks to technology and better/faster means of transportation, communication and collaboration among countries is easier. If we realize that we are interconnected, and that the well-being of a group affects the well-being of others, we may be better equipped to live in an environment of respect and collaboration.



WCAHS held its annual advancement planning retreat on Sept. 19 at the Clos Pegase Estate Winery in Calistoga. A Heat Stress Intervention presentation by Dr. Robert Harrison, M.D, MPH, UCSF was followed by Food-borne Diseases presentation by Michele Jay-Russell, Western Institute for Food Safety and Security, UC Davis. Robin Baker, MPH, COEH, UC Berkeley; Frank Mitloehner, Ph.D., Animal Science and WCAHS principal investigator; and Teresa Andrews, Education and Outreach Specialist at WCAHS provided background and examples of Research to Practice in agriculture before retreat participants broke into three workgroups of 10 (one of which is shown here). Reconvening, each workgroup discussed suggestions, prioritized and set goals for the next year.



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for Agricultural
Health and Safety**

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WCAHS Seminar Series

4-5 p.m., 3201 Hart Hall, UC Davis Campus
Refreshments provided by University Catering

Nov. 3

Paul Leigh, Ph.D., professor of Public Health Sciences, UC Davis Center for Health Policy & Research.
“Costs of Occupational Injury and Illness Combining all Industries”

Dec. 1

Amjad Ramahi, Ph.D. candidate, biological systems engineering, UC Davis, and agricultural specialist for the Zenith Company.
“Financial Impact of Safety”

Jan. 5, 2009

Robert Harrison, M.D., MPH, clinical professor of medicine, UCSE, Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.
“Heat-Related Illness Interventions”

Feb. 2, 2009

Deborah Bennett, Ph.D., professor of Public Health Sciences, UC Davis. “Environmental Exposures Among Farmworkers”

The WCAHS seminar series is available via video webcast at <http://agcenter.ucdavis.edu/seminar/webcast.php>