

## **Fatal Farm Accidents in Wisconsin – 1984**

### **Roger Tormoehlen**

Fatal farm accidents decreased by 20 percent from 1983 to 1984. During 1984, 36 Wisconsin people lost their lives in farm work accidents compared to 45 farm work-related fatalities in 1983. The 1984 figure is the lowest number of farm work-related fatalities ever recorded in Wisconsin. The previous low of 38 farm work-related fatalities was achieved in 1981.

**Figure 1. Number of Fatal Farm Accidents in Wisconsin, 1970-1984**

Year	Number
1970	75
1971	68
1972	79
1973	59
1974	60
1975	71
1976	61
1977	69
1978	48
1979	60
1980	43
1981	38
1982	51
1983	45
1984	36

### **How the Study was Conducted**

Yearly summaries of fatal farm work-related accidents are based on clippings obtained from Wisconsin's daily and weekly newspapers. Local resource people, such as county extension agents, agriculture teachers, and implement dealers, were contacted to further clarify the circumstances surrounding the accidents.

### **Limitations of Study**

Newspaper clippings provide a good source for obtaining data on the type and frequency of accidents occurring on Wisconsin's farms, but newspaper clippings do not allow for the collection and analysis of economic losses associated with farm work accidents. Thus, this study will only attempt to determine the type and frequency of Wisconsin fatal farm work accidents.

### **Type of Accident**

Approximately 78 percent of the 1984 farm work-related fatalities involved tractors or farm machinery. Farm tractors were involved in 12 farm work-related fatalities while farm machinery, other than tractors, was associated with an additional 16 farm work-related fatalities. Figure 2 shows the 1984 farm work-related fatalities by type of accident.

**Figure 2. Wisconsin Farm Work-Related Fatalities by Type of Accident – 1984.**

Type of Accident	Number of Fatalities
Tractor	12
Machinery	16
Woodcutting	1
Falling Object	1
Suffocation	3
Electrocution	1
Animal	2
Total	36

**Farm Tractor-Related Fatalities**

Fatal farm tractor accidents decreased from 25 in 1983 to 12 in 1984. Nine of the 12 tractor accidents resulted in fatalities when the tractor upset. Two children (ages 8 and 11), who were extra riders on the tractor, were fatally injured when they fell from the tractor. Figure 3 shows the 1984 farm tractor-related fatalities by type of accident.

**Figure 3. Farm Tractor-Related Fatalities by Type of Accident – 1984**

Type of Farm Tractor Accident	Number of Fatalities
Overturn	9
Extra Rider	2
Run Over	1
Total	12

**Farm Machinery-Related Fatalities**

The number of fatalities involving farm machinery, other than tractors, increased from 5 in 1983 to 16 in 1984. Being caught in the power take-off (PTO) shaft and being pinned between two objects were the two most frequent accidents involving farm machinery. Figure 4 shows the 1984 farm machinery-related fatalities by type of accident.

**Figure 4. Farm Machinery-Related Fatalities by Type of Accident – 1984.**

Type of Farm Machinery Accident	Number of Fatalities
PTO Entanglement	4
Pinned Between	4
Run Over	3
Caught In	2
Fall	1
Upset	1
Extra Rider	1

**Other Farm Work-Related Accidents**

As indicated in Figure 1, three people were fatally injured as the result of suffocation-related accidents. Two of the suffocation-related fatalities occurred when a farmer and his son were overcome by silo gas (nitrogen dioxide). The other suffocation-related fatality occurred when a young boy was pulled under in a wet grain holding bin.

The two animal-related fatalities were attributed to trampling, sheep in one case and a bull in the other. The woodcutting accident occurred when a tree the victim was cutting fell on him. The electrocution accident happened when a farmer was attempting to plug in an extension cord while standing in mud and water. The falling object-related fatality occurred when a farmer, operating a tractor inside a barn, struck a support beam with the tractor. The collision caused the beam to fall, striking the farmer.

### **Age and Sex of Victims**

The 36 farm work-related fatalities were all male.

The majority of the farm work-related fatalities occurred to people from 25 to 64 years of age. Seven children, 14 years old or younger, were fatally injured in 1984 as the result of farm accidents. Two of the children were under 5 years of age (3 and 4 years old). Six people 65 years old or older were killed in farm work-related accidents with the oldest person being 81 years old. Figure 5 shows the 1984 farm work-related fatalities by victim's age.

**Figure 5. Farm Work-Related Fatalities by Age of Victim – 1984.**

Number of Fatalities	Age (years) of Victim
Under 5	2
5-14	5
15-24	3
25-44	12
54-64	8
65-Over	6

### **Months When Accidents Occurred**

The greatest number of farm work-related fatalities occurred during the summer (June and July) and during late fall—early winter (October and November). Figure 6 shows the 1984 farm work-related fatalities by the month during which they occurred.

**Figure 6. Farm Work-Related Fatalities by Month**

Month	Number of Fatalities
January	0
February	3
March	1
April	2
May	2
June	7
July	4
August	3
September	1
October	4
November	7
December	2

## **Conclusions**

The decrease in farm work-related fatalities in 1984 may have been due to several factors, including:

1. farm safety education programs
2. replacement of older machines with new, better guarded machines
3. replacement of older tractors with newer, ROPS (rolled-over protective structure) equipped tractors. ROPS equipped tractors may be largely responsible for the decrease from 18 tractor upset-related fatalities in 1983 to nine in 1984.

Even though the number of farm work-related fatalities dropped substantially in Wisconsin from 1983 to 1984, efforts must be made to maintain and even improve upon the 1984 figure.