Impact of farm tractor safety training on 4-H youth

AT A GLANCE
Due to the high number of farm-related accidents involving tractors, the UI Extension educator implemented tractor driving safety training for our youth each year at the county fair.

The Situation
According to the National Safety Council, farm-related accidents claimed as many as 1,300 lives/year, as well as 20,000 injuries. Overturned machines accounted for approximately half of tractor-inflicted fatalities. According to safety experts, the vast majority of these accidents were preventable.

In 1985, I conducted a need-based assessment survey. Based on results, it was clear that we needed to take serious action regarding tractor safety training.

Our Response
The educator conducted applied tractor driving training sessions, using University of Idaho-specific curricula, Utah State’s 10 Commandments of Tractor Safety, as well as Teen Safety Solutions applied training information. The 4-Hers were given pre-tests, as well as applied post-interview tests. Pre-tests were multiple choice, and covered general tractor safety information. The post-test covered tractor inspection safety procedures, and applied driving through a series of pre-arranged patterns. During the applied component, a qualified adult driver was present with all youth, administering safety and driving-related instructions.

Program Outcomes
For the past 30 years, a total of 593 4-Hers from Elmore County and the Mountain Home Air Force Base have participated in these applied training sessions. Initial average pre-test scores were 32. Average post-interview test scores were approximately 88, which translate to a B-plus. Ninety-five percent of youth, post-interview, noted that training sessions were “fun,” “exciting,” and they “learned a lot.” Feedback from parents, leaders and other volunteers was also overwhelmingly positive. Many noted that the majority of 4-H participants developed better safety-aware attitudes as a result of training, in addition to stronger work habits around the home, farm and farm machinery.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Mir-M. Seyedbagheri, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Elmore County
535 E. Jackson
Mountain Home, ID 83647
Phone: 208.587.2136 Ext. 509
Fax: 208.587.2137
E-mail: mirs@uidaho.edu or elmore@uidaho.edu

Tractor driving class is one of the most popular events at the Elmore County Fair. Photo by Kim Kovace.