

I-CASH Hosts Rural Road Safety Event

On September 22, Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) held a rural road safety demonstration on Steve Weeber's farm outside of Iowa City. "Crashes on rural roads occur at more than twice the rate of crashes on state roads," said Kelley Donham, director of I-CASH, based in the College of Public Health. "We've been working hard to raise awareness on the issue of rural road safety, because in most cases these accidents are preventable with proper awareness, education, and a little patience."

The event featured presentations from rural road safety experts, engineers, and local farmers, and a question and answer session with local law enforcement. The release of *Rural Road Crashes – They're Preventable*, an educational DVD on the challenges of keeping safe on rural roads, produced by I-CASH with funding from Iowa DOT and the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health was also announced.



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New Developments at the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Safety and Health

by Fred Gerr, MD

We are pleased to inform readers of *Alive and Well* that the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Safety and Health has been approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for continuation of its funding during the next five years. As you may know, the Center is one of ten national Centers devoted to protecting and promoting the health and safety of farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers and their families. This is especially good news since our (and all NIOSH-funded Agricultural Health Centers) future funding was under double scrutiny. The glass is only half-full, however, as one threat to our funding has passed but a second serious threat remains.

Every five years, the faculty and staff of all Agricultural Health Centers must re-apply to NIOSH for continuation of their funding and 2010-2011 was the year. While the Center has been successful for the past twenty years at demonstrating its value and securing ongoing funds, competition has become more intense and this was no time for us to rest on our laurels. Fortunately, the Center had a deep pool of agricultural health and safety talent to draw from. We submitted a winning proposal to NIOSH and were approved for another five years of funding. The Center will be moving in exciting new directions during the next five years, including projects designed to 1) improve the air quality in hog barns by developing better ventilation systems (Renee Anthony, PhD), 2) identify and mitigate the causes of crashes between farm vehicles and registered vehicles on rural roadways (Marizen Ramirez, PhD), 3) characterize risks for low back pain and other musculoskeletal disorders among farmers (Nate Fethke, PhD), 4) enhance communication between faculty and university specialists and farmers, producers, and community organizations committed to agricultural health (Kelley Donham, DVM), and improve the quality of information collected about agricultural illness and injury (Cori Peek-Asa, PhD).



Fred Gerr, MD

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Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety & Health Forum

November 16 & 17, 2011

Ramada Tropics Resort and Conference Center
5000 Merle Hay Road, Des Moines, IA

“Weathering the Elements”

www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

The **Iowa Rural Health Association Annual Conference** will be held **October 13th** in Johnston, IA. The theme of the 2011 Conference is *Rural Health: Staying Connected* and the agenda focuses on three main areas: Rural Policy, Information Technology, and Healthy Communities. The conference brochure is available at www.iaruralhealth.org. Contact the IRHA Office at 515/282-8192 or mprimus@iaruralhealth.org for more information.

Farm Safety 4 Just Kids (FS4JK) Grain Safety Resources

FS4JK has brochures designed to give adults and high school students educational ideas to teach grain safety to youth. The *Great Grain Harvest* educational packet contains everything needed to conduct a farm safety presentation. Background information on the dangers of grain is included, along with lesson plans and demonstration ideas for various age groups. FS4JK also offers heavy duty decals designed to be placed on equipment. The decals outline the dangers of each type of equipment (gravity flow grain wagons, grain trucks, auger wagons) and a “Danger! Never Play Here” decal. The gravity flow grain wagon demonstration is a repurposed toy grain wagon that shows the dangers of flowing grain. Fill the wagon with any type of grain and position a toy person on top of the grain. Opening the gravity gate of the wagon pulls the toy into the grain. Fact Sheets on grain safety and harvest safety are also available, visit www.fs4jk.org for a full list of available educational materials.

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health and their partners have set aside the third Thursday of every November – November 17 in 2011 – to celebrate **National Rural Health Day**. This is an opportunity to increase awareness of the unique healthcare issues facing rural communities, and highlight efforts to address those issues. For more information visit <http://celebratepowerofrural.org>.



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Although we have been approved for continued federal funding for the next five years, such funding is subject to annual budget negotiations in Washington, DC (and, based on recent experience, we know how messy that can become). An early scare in this process occurred when the White House and the Office of Management and Budget proposed terminating all funding for Agricultural Health Centers (see “Terminations, Reductions, and Savings - Fiscal Year 2012”, www.Whitehouse.gov). In order to better educate decision makers about the importance of protecting the health of agricultural workers, the directors of the NIOSH-funded Agricultural Health Centers developed and disseminated fact-sheets describing the impact that NIOSH-funded activities have had on the well-being of farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers, and their families. It seems that someone has been listening - these programs were preserved for the upcoming fiscal year. It now appears that each additional year of funding will likely require a well-coordinated effort to “remind” our appropriators of the value of protecting the health of those who grow our nation’s food, fuel, and fiber.

Finally, in closing, as Director I want to express my sincere thanks to our current Center Coordinator, Ms. Patricia Ramstad. Pat will be leaving the Center at the end of September to provide support to another public health program. Pat has been with the center for the past six years and has assisted two Directors with both day-to-day and long term Center management. We will miss her skills and her commitment to excellence. Best wishes to Pat in her new job!

Dr. Fred Gerr directs the GPCAH, housed in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health of the College of Public Health. He can be reached at 319/335-4212 (fred-gerr@uiowa.edu).

Rural Road Crashes -- They're Preventable

The increase in urbanization of rural areas has led to an increase in traffic on public roads used by farmers as they move equipment and commodities. Housing developments, small acreage lifestyles and movement to bedroom communities all contribute to more traffic on rural roads. Increasing farm size results in larger farm equipment, non-contiguous fields, and more travel time for farm equipment, making rural roads more dangerous.

A study of crashes on low-volume roads from 2001 - 2007 conducted by Iowa State University Institute for Transportation (Project 07-309) found more than 6,000 fatal and major injury crashes on undivided, two-lane rural roads in Iowa. When compared with higher volume primary roads, the rural secondary roadways are more dangerous resulting in two times as many crashes. The hazards include slippery gravel, uncontrolled intersections, no center line, deep ditches and no shoulders. Crash categories found to be overrepresented on low-volume rural roads were crashes involving drivers 19 and younger.



Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) Producers Committee identified rural road crashes as a high priority for reducing agriculture-related injuries and developed a list of objectives to improve rural roadway safety. Those

objectives included changes to the Driver's Education manual, exam, and curriculum to include safety issues related to operation of farm machinery on public roads. An educational campaign "It's Preventable" was developed which includes educational materials and a video to be used by driving instructors, parents, law enforcement and other rural road stakeholders.

A multi-disciplinary task force including I-CASH, Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, Iowa Department of Transportation, and Iowa State University Institute for Transportation Research worked together to produce **Rural Road Crashes - - - They're Preventable**. The video includes information on rural road hazards, including the need for awareness of farm equipment on roadways. The most important advice for drivers is to drive at a speed that is safe for the conditions, which in many cases is slower than the speed limit. Watch for the "Slow Moving Vehicle" sign and be aware that it is illegal to pass on a yellow line at any time. Most important, of course, is to buckle up.

The video kit includes the DVD, a curriculum guide, a test and a parents' guide to helping train young drivers about the hazards of rural roads. *It's Preventable* tips cards can be used with the learning experience as a 'take home' guide.

The video and tips card can be obtained by contacting 515/725-6123 or ods@dot.iowa.gov. For more information contact Eileen Fisher at eileenfisher@uiowa.edu or 319/335-4224.



calendar

October 7 & 21

Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals - Videoconference
Dickinson, ND
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

October 13

Iowa Rural Health Association Annual Conference
Johnston, IA
www.iaruralhealth.org

October 13-15

Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals- Session 2
Marshfield, WI
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

October 25-28

Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals
Fairlee, VT
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

November 3-4

40th Annual Iowa Governor's Safety & Health Conference: Road to Excellence
Cedar Rapids, IA
www.regonline.com/gskonference2011

November 4-5

Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for Rural Health Professionals
Dickinson, ND
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

November 10-12

21st Annual Midwest Stream Farmworker Health Forum
Albuquerque, NM
www.ncfh.org

November 16-17

Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Forum - Weathering the Elements
Des Moines, IA
www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash

November 17

National Rural Health Day
<http://celebratepowerofrural.org>
www.iaruralhealth.org

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“More than 80 percent of the roads in Iowa are local or rural roadways,” said Eileen Fisher, associate director of I-CASH. “This being National Farm Safety and Health Week, we figured it’d be the perfect time to raise awareness about driving safely on these roads.” In addition to Donham, David Patterson, Iowa County Engineers Association; Roger Stutsman, local farmer; and Deputy Pete Ungaro all presented on the dangers of driving on rural roadways. The event also featured the opportunity to ride along the rural roads in a large tractor and a combine to experience first-hand the dangers farmers and drivers face when traveling along Iowa’s gravel roadways.



In addition to the presenters, guests included staff from the offices of Sen. Chuck Grassley, Sen. Tom Harkin, and Rep. Dave Loebsack, as well as representatives from the Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau, Driver Education, Johnson County Sheriff Office, Iowa State Patrol, and a host of local farmers. For more information on I-CASH, visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash. The video *Rural Road Crashes – They’re Preventable* is available to download online at www.iowadot.gov/mvd/ods/RuralRoadCrashes.html. See related article on [page 3](#).