



National Safety Council

Position/Policy Statement

Childhood Risks Involving Tractors

The National Safety Council recognizes that youth on farms and ranches are exposed to unique safety hazards not experienced by other children. These youth are at increased risk because they live, play, and work in an environment where many occupational hazards exist. Injuries to small/young children tend to occur in situations where they are playing with insufficient supervision in the farm environment or are near or on agricultural equipment operated by adults, siblings, or peers. In addition, some farm and ranch youth may operate tractors before they have the physical and judgmental abilities to do so safely. Based on studies reporting all types of deaths among youth exposed to agricultural hazards, tractors are involved in the greatest overall percentage.

The Council urges appropriate agencies, manufacturers and professionals to identify and implement the most effective intervention strategies and manufacturers to implement appropriate design features that would decrease the proportion of child injury incidents involving tractors in operation. The Council also encourages parents or guardians to voluntarily prohibit their children from riding on or being in the presence of operating tractors and urges that farm and ranch youth organizations, such as the National FFA Organization and 4-H, continue to promote their "No Rider" programs and develop new strategies for enhancing these efforts.

Developmental considerations suggest that, while it may never be too soon to start educating people about safety, children cannot be expected to regulate their own risk taking behaviors without adult supervision, no matter how much they have been instructed. Currently, there is little research data available on appropriate age, cognitive and physical development required for the operation of tractors by youths. There is also little data on the effectiveness of current programs that educate youth in the safe operation of tractors and other farm equipment. The Council encourages that studies in these areas be conducted and supported so that more reliable data can be developed.

This position statement reflects the opinions of the National Safety Council but not necessarily those of its individual members.

Approved by the Agricultural Division, November 1, 1994

Approved by the Board of Directors, November 8, 1995