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Responding To Harvest Injuries

Keeping some safety points in mind during the harvest season can make your response easier and more effective if you are ever on the scene of a farm injury, a South Dakota State University specialist said.

“Knowing what to do and taking immediate action when an injury happens may reduce the extent to which an injury may affect a victim,” SDSU Extension Farm Safety Specialist Dick Nicolai said.

According to Nicolai, the goal of the first person on the scene is to keep the victim alive until emergency medical services (EMS) arrive.

“The ability to make the right decisions after discovering a farm injury depends on whether you, the first person on the scene, have knowledge in assessing farm injury scenes and first aid,” Nicolai said. Many victims are discovered by family members or farm workers who must be able to stay calm and act quickly and effectively to save the victim without injuring themselves. Understanding CPR and first aid for farm injury victims will improve their chances for survival. All family members and full-time farm workers should receive first aid and CPR training.

When you discover a farm injury, Nicolai said, take the following steps in this order:

1. Get professional help to the injury scene.
2. Ensure that the victim and you are not in further danger.
3. Provide patient care.

Getting professional help usually means calling the local EMS. If no phone is available, contact a neighbor, flag down a passing motorist, call on a two-way radio, or send an available second person to contact EMS. In general, the sooner a victim receives advanced medical care, the better.

“There may be situations where timing is crucial because the victim may not be breathing or may be bleeding severely. You may be able to prevent death or permanent brain damage if you administer CPR or first aid before leaving to call EMS,” he added.

Your safety must be the primary concern while approaching the injury scene. Controlling hazards at the scene that could harm you or cause further harm to the victim is the second action you should take. Typical hazards include uncontrolled movement of machinery, fire and explosions, spills of hot liquids or chemicals, and exposure to electrical current or toxic fumes. Guidelines for stabilizing specific types of emergency scenes are provided in the publication *First on the Scene*, NRAES-12, available from MidWest Plan Service (MWPS), Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

The first step in providing patient care is to determine whether the victim is conscious. If the victim is responsive, you can assume that the victim is breathing and has effective heart action. Then you should determine whether arterial bleeding is occurring and control the bleeding. If the victim does not respond and is not breathing, administer CPR.

Additional information can be found in *Farm Rescue*, NRAES-10, also available from MWPS. Both publications can be ordered through the on-line catalog on the MWPS Web site, <http://www.mwpsHQ.org> or by calling 800-562-3618.