



**SAFETY! Protecting your workers, your family, yourself, and  
your business**

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A baseball game; the bottom of the ninth inning, the home team is down by one run, a player on third waits to come home for the tie, the player on second hopes to score the winning run. The batter hits the ball sharply past the second baseman. The runners drive for home, SAFE says the umpire once, SAFE he says the second time. The home team wins, the game is over, victory is celebrated.

Coming home SAFE. Easy to take for granted. Easy to think of as something that will always happen without intentional planning and management. Far too easy to forget for that one tragic, or even fatal, split second that changes life forever. In baseball, coming home safe and winning the game are the result of skill, training, practice, and good management. Winning baseball clubs never leave winning to chance or luck. The same discipline should be true of safety for every Harvester operation, from the smallest part-timer, to the largest multi-state/multi-national enterprise.

Statistically, agricultural work is classified as a dangerous occupation. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) farmers and ranchers have the fourth highest fatal injury rate among occupations, with only fishing, logging, and aviation being higher! Because of this, there is tremendous pressure from state and federal elected and regulatory officials to expand and increase the regulation and enforcement activity into all agricultural

work. DOL is not alone, State and Federal DOT regulators look at us, agriculture, as likely

Farm and agricultural accidents kill or maim our friends, neighbors, and family members every year. Can anyone who has been in agriculture for most of their life state that they do not have a family member, friend, neighbor, or other acquaintance who has been killed or suffered some permanent injury on the job? The personal costs and family tragedies are terrible enough. In addition to the personal cost, every time someone allows him/herself, or another, to be involved in an agricultural accident there are huge and looming "costs" and "losses" to the entire agricultural community. Whether we personally know the victims or not, every time young people are killed or maimed, we lose part of the future of agriculture. Every time a Harvester, family member, visitor, or employee is involved in an accident American agriculture loses people, time, produce, money, and reputation. Every agricultural related accident we read about pushes us closer to more and more regulatory burden on farm and other agricultural operations. These costs are only added to the terrible burden that everyone who has had such an accident related to their business carries with them for the rest of their lives.

"Safety is no accident"--- "nearly all accidents are preventable"--- these are true statements and everyone has a responsibility to take the necessary precautions to prevent agricultural accidents; for yourself, for your family and friends, for the future of agriculture. In addition to personal/family considerations, as employers, you have both moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe workplace, to provide proper training, to provide the necessary safety equipment and programs, and to require everyone to participate.

Safety does not happen by accident, it is always the result of intentional planning, and it does not result from writing or adopting a one-time plan, but requires a relentless every-day commitment to creating a culture of safe work in every aspect of your operation. A culture of safety in a Harvest, or other business, must be an almost religious pursuit. USCHI, NCAE and many others stand committed to building safety into every aspect of daily agricultural life. The author is privileged to serve on the Board of one such group, the Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA.) Visit

the [ASHCA website](#), [USCHI](#), [NCAE's website](#), your insurance provider, or your State extension sites for detailed information to conduct your own safety audits and to make deliberate safety plans for your own operation.

America needs you, your family, your employees, and the next generation of agriculture working and growing to feed the world, not populating the DOL accident statistics! Commit or recommit to think safety first every single minute of every single day in 2015 so that we can all enjoy the winter meetings together at the end of the season.

The author is Executive Vice President of the National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE.) NCAE is the national trade association representing Agricultural Employers in Washington, DC. NCAE advocates and addresses employer issues for all employers of both domestic and H-2 agriculture workers. NCAE is proud to count many individual growers and grower associations among our Membership. The invitation to become an individual Member of NCAE and receive our communication and information direct is extended to all agricultural employers. Visit NCAE's [website](#) at for more information and continuing updates.