2024 Northeast Agricultural and Logging Fatality Report





New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Northeast Center (NEC) highlights occupational fatalities among agricultural and logging workers in the Northeast region. We recognize that each person represented in this report died in tragic circumstances and we honor their memory in our mission to prevent future fatalities, injuries and illnesses. The information contained within this report is aggregated primarily through web scraping and is supplemented with a review of the AgInjuryNews database [1].

Fatalities are identified through keywords and verified through visual inspection by a research specialist before being uploaded to a database, where specific variables are then coded through the Farm and Agricultural Injury Classification [2] (FAIC), Occupational



Injury and Illness Classification System [3] (OIICS), and North American Industry Classification System [4] (NAICS) codes. Additionally, available narratives are recorded and appropriate files attached. Descriptive statistics were calculated in Microsoft Excel based on a variety of factors, including age, gender, type of event, and source of injury.

Unlike the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries [5] (CFOI), which accounts for active agricultural laborers in their data, we include all instances of agricultural-associated fatalities, such as that of a child who was not actively working [6]. As such, fatalities in this report are representative of the entirety of the agricultural sphere, encompassing farmers, farmworkers, children, bystanders, and victims of public roadway collisions involving agricultural equipment and vehicles, in addition to forestry and logging.

While the working conditions of many Americans have improved over recent decades, some remain stubbornly behind. This is especially evident in rural, remote areas where heritage industries prevail, and alternative occupational opportunities may be limited. The health disparities created and exacerbated by these factors are contributing to worsening health outcomes and at times, fatalities. This creates further health inequities and ripple effects in these under-served rural communities.

The agriculture and logging industries are emblematic of this overall phenomenon for a multitude of reasons, including but not limited to:

- 1. Tasks that often dictate working alone in remote and rural areas
- 2. Operation of dangerous heavy equipment in unpredictable weather in an ever-changing climate
- 3. Small businesses which are frequently strained by changes in international trade agreements, global economics, and regulatory changes
- 4. The erosion of the rural workforce has made it difficult to ensure adequate staff, squeezing those in the industry to work longer hours with less recovery time

ABOUT THESE INDUSTRIES

Agriculture

Agriculture in the Northeast encompasses many commodity types (Figure 2) [7]. Industry trends can be seen in the table below highlighting data from the recent Census of Agriculture (Table 1) [8, 9]. Farming in this region is made up of an array of business types and sizes—some many generations established, others recent startups. Ag-based businesses make up the economic engine that produces more than \$100 billion in business activity in the Northeast. This requires over half of a million workers tackling a wide variety of tasks, many of which are inherently risky.

Logging

The Northeast and Appalachian forests provide livelihoods for thousands of logging industry workers. Nearly one in nine U.S. logging jobs is located in our service region producing nearly \$13 billion in gross domestic product—from lumber, paper, and cardboard, to pulpwood and biomass for fuel. Before a big haul is trucked out of the woods, a tremendous amount of skill and hard work done by hand and with sophisticated large machinery takes place. Workers often endure extremes—subzero cold, long shifts that might start in the middle of the night, far commutes into the depths of remote forest, and potential risk to one's health and safety. Logging workers also suffer from higher rates of injury, hearing loss, musculoskeletal disorders and chronic illness than those in other industries [10].

State	Number of Farms	Land in Farms (acres)	Average Size of Farms (acres)	Number of Producers	Hired Farm Labor
СТ	5,058 🔻	372,014 🔻	74	9,374 🔻	11,259 🛛 🔻
DE	2,158 🔻	522,834 🔻	242	3,812 🛛 🔻	3,412 🔻
ME	7,036 🔻	1,225,046 🔻	174	13,053 🔻	11,122 🔻
MD	12,550	1,978,036 🛛 🔻	158 🔻	23,507	14,820 🔻
МА	7,083 🔻	464,451 🗸 🔻	66 🔻	13,248	14,032
NH	3,949 🔻	417,187 🛛 🔻	106	7,209	4,627 🛛 🔻
NJ	9,998	711,502	71 🔻	18,591 🔺	24,464 🔻
NY	30,650 🔻	6,502,286 🛛 🔻	212	57,558 🔻	56,578
PA	49,053 🔻	7,058,325 🔻	144	90,032 🔻	60,475 🛛 🔻
RI	1,054	59,076	56	1,938	1,667 🛛 🔻
νт	6,537 🔻	1,173,890 🔻	180	12,470	8,331 🔻
wv	22,787 🔻	3,549,104 🔻	156	39,109	7,175 🔻

Table 1: Agricultural Producers, All NEC Region [7, 8].

Numbers shown indicate 2022 statistics, while arrows indicate trends from 2017 statistics.

ABOUT THESE INDUSTRIES, CONT.

Figure 2: Top Three Agricultural Commodities by State [6]





🔆 Cranberries





100











Miscellaneous



Turkeys 3







(4)

FATALITY TRENDS

Total in Northeast

Across the Northeast, we identified 45 fatalities within the agricultural and logging industries in 2024. Of these 45 fatalities, eight were children under the age of 18. Nine were women or girls.

Agriculture

Nationally, agriculture remains a dangerous industry, with the most recent national fatality rates for agricultural workers exceeding the all-worker (average) fatality rate by a factor of five. [5] Within the Northeast, the 32 agricultural fatalities ranged in age from two to 92. Pennsylvania had the highest burden of fatalities, accounting for 60% of the Northeast's total.

Agricultural Roadway Fatalities

There were six newsworthy agricultural roadway fatalities. Victims ranged in age from 45 to 85. The fatalities peaked during the summer. Four of the six incidents were agricultural equipment operators.

Prior research confirms the substantial risks in operating farm equipment and machinery on public roadways [11, 12].

Child Fatalities

There were six child fatalities of children under 15. Of those, three victims were toddlers.

Most of the child fatalities (five) occurred in Pennsylvania, with Lancaster County being an area of focus. Lancaster County is home to the largest Amish and Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania, and the children who lost their lives there in 2024 were all Amish. These fatalities occurred in a variety of ways, with no single event or source dominating the data. Some fatal incidents included being caught in a barn ventilation system, fatal ingestion of nitrogen oxides in a silo interior, and being struck by a farm tractor.



Logging

We identified 13 fatalities in 2024 related to logging and log trucking: ten men and three women between the ages of 17 to 75 died. Maine and Pennsylvania account for over three quarters of the cases, with an equal share between them. These fatalities peak in the winter. Adults comprise the vast majority of all logging fatalities, with one third being range of 35-44 years old.

The most common occupations associated with these deaths were specialized freight trucking as well as heavy and/or tractor-trailer truck drivers, rather than those of the felling specific occupations. However, incidents on the road may be more likely to be reported in the news than those that occur in the woods. More than half of logging fatalities occurred when the worker was alone. The victims lost their lives to traumatic injuries due to mainly vehicle- related incidences such as roadway collisions, jack-knifes or overturns, and running off roadways. Semi and tractor-trailers are by far the most common source of injury.

LIMITATIONS

Since these fatalities are gathered through public news reports, we acknowledge that this report may miss important occupational fatalities that did not appear in the news. Our overall injury surveillance efforts include using additional sources of information, such as hospitalization and pre-hospital care (PCR) reports, however the timeliness of these datasets make them unsuitable for reporting on very recent events. In addition, we do our best to crosscheck our fatalities with state programs that review death certificates and other occupational injury data, but the relative timing of data being collected and available for comparison varies between jurisdictions.

PREVENTION RESOURCES

The usage of slow-moving vehicle emblems on both vehicles and implements, observing speed limits, hazard light usage, oversized load signage, and escort vehicles all help contribute to safer transportation. In addition, tractor and ATV safety training can educate operators about roadway dangers. Non-agricultural driver education helps the public be aware of agricultural roadway usage. Additional resources on tractor operation and roadway safety can be found on our website.

The appropriateness of certain agricultural tasks is partly dictated by the developmental age and ability of a child. Some of these children lost their lives doing work tasks that were not recommended for children their age. In agricultural safety literature, recommendations exist to match types of agricultural tasks with age groups as well as to have a designated safe play area for children on farms. This would shield them as bystanders to work which carries risk.

Injury prevention resources are available online through the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) and the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety (NEC) websites: nycamh.org and necenter.org, respectively.

In addition, national resources are available from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (CDC-NIOSH) at: www.cdc.gov/niosh/research-programs/portfolio/aff.html

Further, specific safety programs available through NEC and NYCAMH include:

NATIONAL

National ROPS Rebate Program

Power Take-Off (PTO) Shielding

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

<u>New Yorк</u> John May Farm Safety Fund

Farm Safety Trainings & Site Walkthroughs

www.necenter.org

New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health

www.nycamh.org

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety (NEC) is to enhance the health of AgFF workers by identifying priority health and safety issues and working with AgFF communities and stakeholders to develop prevention solutions.

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