

!!TRACTOR HAZARD ALERT!!

KY FATALITY ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL EVALUATION PROJECT (KY FACE)

July 1997

Since January, at least six Kentucky farmers have been killed in tractor rollovers in which terrain changes caused by recent heavy rainfalls were a factor. In addition to mud and wet, slick grass, the rain created marshy areas and holes where none had been before; often these places are invisible due to weeds and tall grass.

INCIDENTS and RECOMMENDATIONS:

(1) A 56-year-old farmer was killed when the tricycle tractor he was operating on a wet hillside overturned. The ground was muddy with patchy wet grass. As he attempted to turn the tractor with its front bucket lifted, fully loaded, the tractor rolled over several times.

RECOMMENDATIONS: (a) Retrofit older tractors with rollover protective structures (ROPS) and seatbelts to keep the operator in a protected zone; (b) use fluid-filled tires and front-end counterweights to improve traction and stability; (c) keep front-end loaders as low as possible; and (d) evaluate and make allowances for environmental factors such as mud and wet grass.

(2) On a warm sunny day, a farmer was mowing his pasture for the first time this year. The height of the grass and weeds hid a 9-foot embankment which was about 18 feet from where he was mowing. As he began a turn, the tractor started to slide in the moist soil under the weeds. It slid all the way to the embankment and rolled over the edge, pinning the farmer underneath. He died at the scene.

RECOMMENDATIONS: (a) All tractors should be equipped with ROPS and seatbelts to protect operators in the event of rollover; and (b) prior to beginning work, the area should be assessed for hazards that might not be obvious to the tractor operator.

For additional farm safety information contact KY FACE at 1-800-204-3223 or in Lexington 257-4955. FACE is a project of the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (a partnership of the KY Dept. for Health Services and the University of KY), located at UK Chandler Medical Center.