

Purdue University

Agricultural Safety and Health Program

2025 Indiana Farm Fatality Summary with Historical Overview¹

Compiled by the Purdue University Agricultural Safety and Health Program

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Abstract

Purdue University's Agricultural Safety and Health Program has been monitoring farm-related fatalities in Indiana for over 60 years. It remains one of the oldest continuing surveillance of farm-related fatalities in the U.S. The earliest identified summary of cases, published in 1966, examined 76 fatalities reported during 1963.² Though acknowledged as not being comprehensive of all farm-related deaths occurring in Indiana, the Purdue Farm Fatality Database provides a unique historical perspective to explore trends that have occurred over several decades. During that time, the total number of farms and the number of people directly involved in production agriculture have declined considerably, while production technology and farming practices have transformed dramatically. During the 1940's and early 1950's the leading identifiable cause of death was livestock, primarily horses and bulls. These animal-related injuries and deaths have largely been replaced, at a much lower frequency, with tractors and machinery. The annual number of farm-related fatalities continues to show a general downward trend that parallels the decline in the number of farm operations. The reduction in the number of farm operations has likely contributed more to the reduction in farm-related fatalities than any other single factor³, even as Indiana farmers have become more productive than ever. In other words, the state is producing more grain, meat, eggs, and other agricultural products at a lower rate of fatalities and injuries than at any time in its history. While the total number of farm-related deaths has gradually declined the fatality rate per number of workers remains one of the highest of all Indiana occupations.

In 2025, 17 fatalities were reported, including three victims under the age of 18 and six aged 60 or older. Together, these two age groups accounted for 53% of all documented cases. Tractors remain the most common cause of farm-related fatalities, historically accounting for as many as 43% of all documented cases. Throughout the last six decades, tractor overturns have consistently been the primary contributor to fatalities in farm-related incidents, even though Rollover Protection Structures (ROPS) have been mandatory on new

¹ Appreciation is extended to Executive Director Stacy Wart, BLS Coordinator Joseph Black, and Survey Assistants Richard Clark and Rhapsody Owens with the Indiana Department of Labor Quality Metrics & Statistics Division for contributing to this report.

² Mitchell, Bailey W. (1966) Indiana Farm Accident Report 1963-1965. Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

³ Data from USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=INDIANA

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Indiana/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/index.php

tractors since 1985. In 2025, three female farm-related fatalities were reported. The average age of all victims was 46.5 years—lower than the current average age of Indiana farmers, which is 55.5. Amish and Old Order communities in the state continue to account for a disproportionate number of farm-related deaths. Findings suggest that over the past decade, the range of agents involved in these fatalities has grown more diverse. Key hazards requiring targeted attention include the use of older tractors without ROPS (Rollover Protective Structures) and self-propelled mowers on steep slopes; tree felling and working in wooded areas; skid steer operation in the presence of bystanders; ATV and UTV operation on farms; working with livestock such as horses and bulls; and carrying extra riders on equipment. The results of this summary help guide the allocation of resources for injury prevention efforts.

Publication of this annual summary is also intended to make the public aware that our food comes at a cost of lives, health, and well-being that is not necessarily reflected in the prices we pay at the grocery store or farmer's market.

Methods of Data Collection

The 2025 Indiana Farm Fatality summary was compiled by Purdue's Agricultural Safety and Health Program from a variety of sources, including published news reports, web searches, reporting from Extension educators and others, and voluntary feedback from witnesses, family, or responders. No additional cases were identified through sources outside Indiana, including the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and AgInjuryNews.org. Data were compared with findings from the Indiana Department of Labor and adjusted to reflect differences due to data interpretation, data collection sources, and occupational classification. There is no claim made that the presented data are comprehensive but rather represent the best assessment currently available.⁴

Farm-related fatalities and injuries remain underreported and are hard to distinguish, in some cases, from other worker categories. In Indiana, unlike most industries regulated by OSHA, there is no requirement to centrally report such incidents for most farms. No national initiative currently aims to improve the accuracy of Indiana farm injury and fatality data beyond these annual reports. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks fatalities, its data combines farming with fishing, forestry, and hunting, and often omits small farms, children, and unpaid family workers.

Several other Midwestern states no longer have the capacity to document and report on these incidents beyond the limited data available from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, which has historically underreported farm-related fatalities. Some key agricultural states have eliminated or diminished their land grant university-based farm safety efforts and, due to prohibitions in federal appropriation language, federal and state OSHAs have generally maintained a hands-off approach to most agricultural production sites.

The most recent data from the Indiana Department of Labor documented 25 fatalities in 2024 and classified agriculture as the state's most hazardous industry.⁵ Differences in fatality reporting between Purdue and the Indiana Department of Labor stem from variations in how workers and events are classified. For instance, Purdue typically excludes motor vehicle crashes unrelated to transporting farm equipment or crops, while including children involved in farm labor—who are often omitted from Department of Labor reports due to being classified as non-employees. As shown in the annual Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, farm-related fatalities in Indiana consistently make up a disproportionately large share of the state's workplace deaths.

⁴ Differences may be found in reporting of prior years due to the addition of previously unidentified cases to the database.

⁵ [DOL: Workplace Fatalities](#)

Description of 2025 Farm-related Fatalities

Table 1 provides the descriptions, dates, and locations of the 17 fatalities documented as agricultural workplace incidents. However, this list may be incomplete due to inconsistent reporting requirements, cases involving Indiana residents who died in out-of-state medical facilities, or delayed deaths from injury-related complications. The list excludes fatalities from: (1) motor vehicle incidents involving farm vehicles unless they occurred during active farm work, (2) preexisting health conditions such as heart attacks, and (3) medical issues from long-term workplace exposures such as skin cancer and chronic pesticide use. Data on the impact of such factors, especially agricultural chemicals on Indiana farmers and farm workers, remains limited. The frequency of acute poisoning resulting in death from agricultural chemicals is extremely low.

Table 1. Description of Documented 2025 Farm-Related Fatalities

Date	County	Age	Gender	Description
2/12/2025	Wayne	57	M	Skid steer rollover
2/27/2025	Kosciusko	64	M	Drowning in ditch
3/26/2025	Steuben	79	M	Pinned by equipment
4/9/2025	Marshall	58	F	Grain bin suffocation
4/11/2025	Elkhart	74	M	Tractor rollover
4/14/2025	LaGrange	40	M	Struck by tree limb
5/2/2025	Elkhart	3	M	Skid steer loader runover
5/23/2025	Daviess	77	M	Spreader truck runover
6/4/2025	Daviess	25	M	Tractor rollover fatality
6/7/2025	Daviess	16	M	Pinned by fallen jacked truck
6/23/2025	Jackson	4	M	Farm equipment runover
6/23/2025	Jackson	68	F	Farm equipment runover
6/29/2025	Ripley	66	M	Mower overturn
6/29/2025	Steuben	51	M	Fall from roof of farm building
8/6/2025	Dubois	23	M	ATV overturn
9/19/2025	Howard	45	F	Carbon monoxide exposure
10/28/2025	Adams	41	M	Fall

Summary of Findings

In 2025, 17 farm-related fatalities were documented in Indiana, which is well below the long-term annual average of 29 since 1970. As shown in Figure 1, the lowest annual total was 8 deaths in 2006, while the highest were 54 in 1981, 49 in 1990, and 44 in 2016. Although the overall trend has shown a decline in annual fatalities over the past six decades, spikes in 2016, 2017, and 2018 briefly disrupted this pattern. While yearly numbers have fluctuated, the long-term decline remains notable, especially considering that earlier incidents were likely underreported due to limited access to records, such as online sources.

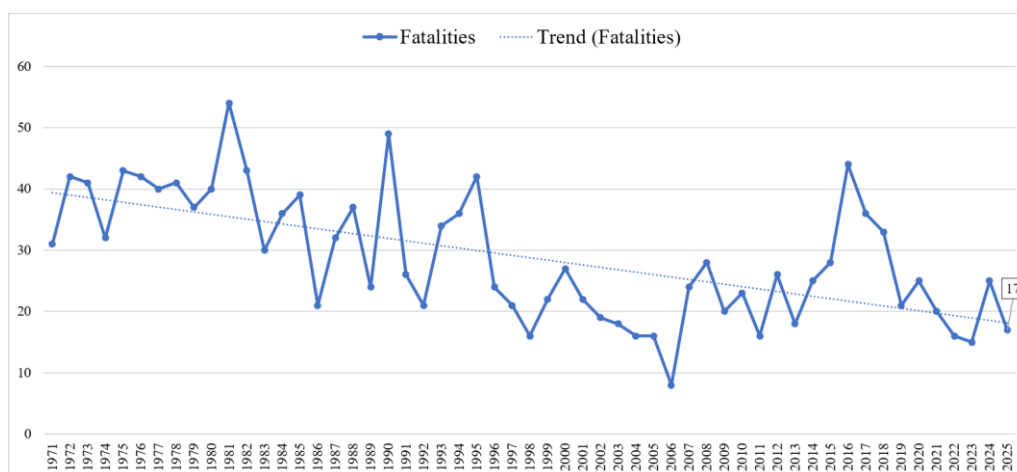


Figure 1. Farm-related fatalities: 1970-2025

No specific factor has been identified that contributed to the recurring spikes (or declines) in frequency. Other than incidents involving tractors and farm machinery, agents of injury have varied widely. This lack of consistency makes targeting limited prevention resources difficult, except for tractor-related incidents. The continued occurrence of tractor-related incidents, such as overturns and runovers, indicates that a greater focus on the value of ROPS—especially on older tractors used for mowing—could prove beneficial.

In 2025, the age range of the victims spanned from 3 to 79, with an average age of 46.5 (Figure 2). This average age is lower than the current average age of Indiana farmers, which stands at 55.5. It's also significantly lower than reported in recent years. However, it's important to note that a direct comparison may not be entirely accurate because the average age of Indiana farmers does not include individuals under the age of 18. This omission raises questions about the extent of children and youth involvement in farm-related work and exposure to associated hazards. Notably, within some families, particularly in the Amish community, children and youth may play a significant role in farm activities. Historically, farm-related injuries have been disproportionately common among farmers aged over 60, even those who work part-time. Recent increases in fatalities among older farmers over the past decade highlight the need for special attention to this demographic.

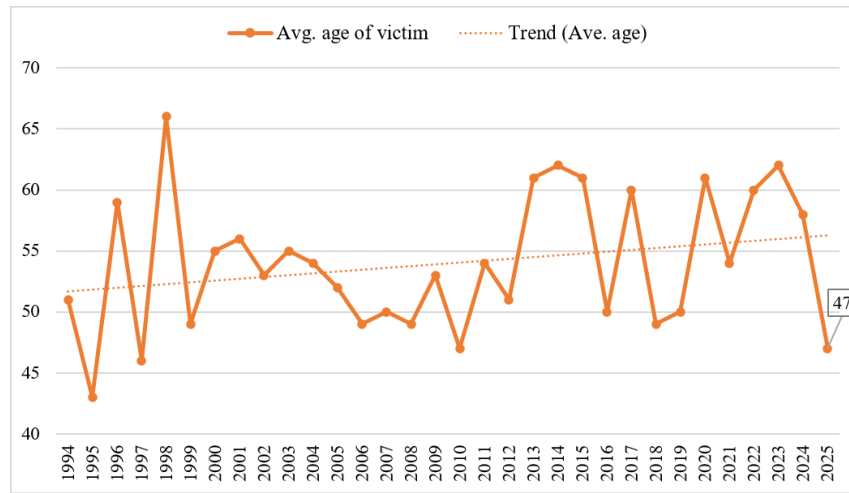


Figure 2. Average Age of farm-related fatalities 1994-2025

In 2025, three farm-related fatalities involved children and youth under the age of 18 (Figure 3). One high-profile case in June involved a 4-year-old boy being accompanied by his grandmother when both were run over and killed by a combine. Historically, children and youth have made up a disproportionately high share of farm fatalities, with some years seeing nearly one-third of all cases in this age group. This is no longer the case in Indiana.

Over the past 40 years, Indiana has placed strong emphasis on improving safety for children and youth in agricultural settings. This shift reflects changing attitudes among parents and the public, leading to fewer children engaging in hazardous farm work. Greater compliance with child safety regulations, such as the Hazardous Occupations Order for Agriculture, and the use of larger, more complex equipment, often unsuitable for young or inexperienced workers, have also contributed to fewer incidents. Additionally, the overall decline in farm operations and the number of children living on farms has likely played a role, aligning with the broader trend of decreasing annual farm fatalities.

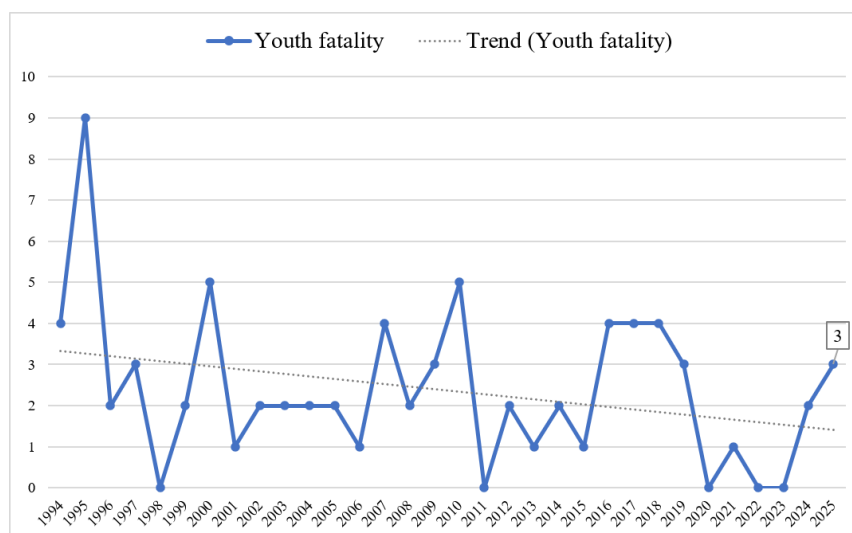


Figure 3. Number of youth farm-related fatalities: 1994-2025

Table 2 summarizes documented incidents during the period 1994 to 2025 involving youth and those 60 and older. For the past 32 years, there were no fewer than 747 fatalities, of which 78 cases were under the age of 18 and 364 were age 60 and older. Again, these two groups have historically represented a disproportional share of the total deaths, accounting for 59% of the total. In 2025, these two age groups accounted for 18% and 35% of documented fatalities.

Table 2. Analysis of "youth" and "over 60" fatalities as percent of total farm-related fatalities

Year	Deaths	Youth Deaths as % of Total	Deaths	Over 60 Deaths as % of Total	Deaths of Both Youth & Over 60	Percent of Both Youth and Over 60 Deaths	Average Age of Victim	Total Farm-Related Fatalities
	Ages		Age					
	1-17		60+					
2025	3	18%	6	35%	9	53%	47	17
2024	2	8%	15	60%	17	68%	58	25
2023	0	0%	10	67%	10	67%	62	15
2022	0	0%	10	63%	10	63%	60	16
2021	1	5%	8	40%	9	54%	54	20
2020	2	8%	13	52%	15	60%	61	25
2019	3	14%	11	52%	14	66%	50	21
2018	4	12%	16	48%	20	61%	49	33
2017	4	9%	18	50%	22	61%	60	36
2016	4	11%	15	33%	19	42%	50	44
1994-2015	55	11%	242	49%	297	60%	54	495
Total	78	10%	364	49%	442	59%	54	747

During the past 32 years, tractors were involved in 322, or 43%, of Indiana's farm-related fatalities, most commonly through overturns and runovers. Tractor-related fatalities have generally declined, from 16 cases in 2016 to five in 2025, when they accounted for 29% of all farm fatalities. Increased use of rollover protective structures (ROPS), cab-equipped tractors, improved tractor stability, and proper ballasting have likely contributed to this decline. At the same time, the agents involved in other farm fatalities have become more diverse (Table 3).

Table 3. History of Indiana tractor-related fatalities

Year	Number of Tractor-Related Fatalities	Number of All Farm Fatalities	Percent of Tractor Related Fatalities in Total Fatalities
2025	5	17	29%
2024	10	25	40%
2023	5	15	33%
2022	9	16	56%
2021	6	20	30%
2020	9	25	36%
2019	8	21	38%
2018	12	33	36%
2017	13	36	36%
2016	16	44	36%
2015	11	28	39%
2014	13	25	52%
2013	6	18	33%
2012	12	26	46%
2011	6	16	38%
2010	11	23	48%
2009	11	20	55%
1994-2008	159	339	47%
Total	322	747	43%

With approximately 52,000 productive farms in Indiana, it was estimated that in 2025 one out of every 3,058 farms experienced a farm-related fatality.⁶ Using a population of 94,282 farm producers in Indiana, the death rate in 2025 was approximately 18 per 100,000 farm workers, the same as in 2020.⁷ Indiana is often referred to as an agricultural state, although less than 1% of the workforce is employed in production agriculture. However, the agriculture industry has consistently accounted for one of the highest annual numbers of work-related fatalities in the state, and in 2024 recorded the most of any industry (Indiana Department of Labor, 2026). The estimated DOL fatality rate of 21.2 per 100,000 Indiana farm workers in 2025 compares to 2023 Bureau of Labor Statistics rates in Indiana of 5.1 per 100,000 full-time workers across all industries and 22.7 per 100,000 in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (2023).⁸

It is believed that both Indiana and national farm-related fatality rates would be lower if unpaid family laborers were included in the population considered regularly exposed to farm hazards. For instance, older family members often continue participating in farm work but are not counted as employed, often to maintain Social Security eligibility. Additionally, while the National Safety Council and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries have historically excluded children under 16 from rate calculations, Purdue's Agricultural Safety and Health Program includes them if they were involved in, or exposed to, farm-related activities.

⁶ Estimated number of farms from the final report of the [nr2511in.pdf](#)

⁷ Estimated farm population of producers and hired workers on farms from the final report of the 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture. This number does not include unpaid family labor such as retired family members and children. [cp99018.pdf](#)

⁸ Estimated death rates from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023). [Fatal injury rates\(1\) by state of incident and industry\(2\), all ownerships, 2023 : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Figure 4 shows the distribution of documented farm-related fatalities over the past 40 years when the county of location was known. Every county in the state has experienced multiple documented farm fatalities. The 9 counties with the highest number of documented cases are as follows:

- Elkhart-39
- LaGrange-34
- Dubois-25
- Greene-25
- St. Joseph-25
- Daviess-23
- Franklin-22
- Adams-21
- Kosciusko-20

Elkhart and LaGrange counties are home to the state's largest Amish/Old Order populations. These groups have historically accounted for a disproportionate share of farm-related fatalities. In one recent annual summary, Amish/Old Order farmers and family members accounted for approximately one-third of all documented fatalities. The continued use of horses as a primary power source, bulls for breeding, older machinery that does not meet current safety standards, and the greater number of children engaged in farm work are significant contributors to higher frequencies of fatalities in this community.

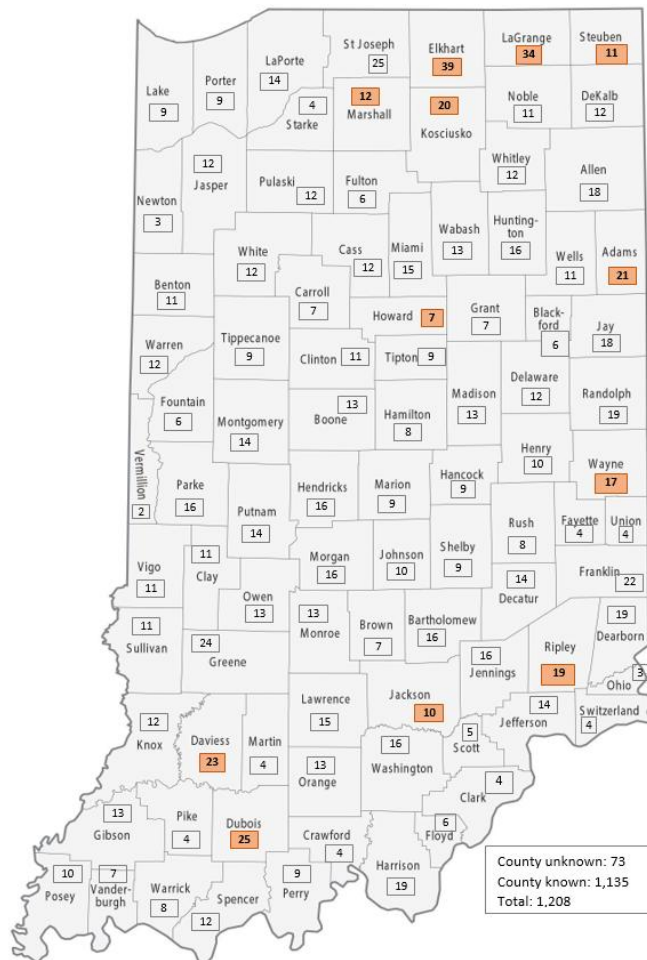


Figure 4. Geographic distribution by county of Indiana's farm-related fatalities from 1980 through 2025

Summary of Indiana's Farm-Related, Non-Fatal Incidents and Their Economic Impact

In 2025, 37 non-fatal farm-related injuries were identified through fatality surveillance efforts, notably more than in previous years. Horse-and-buggy collisions accounted for the largest category, with 13 cases,

many of which resulted from a single multi-victim crash near Berne. These were followed by roadway collisions involving farm equipment and other vehicles (7 cases), tractor-related incidents (6 cases), and grain bin or silo entrapments and rescues (6 cases). The remaining incidents included two off-road vehicle crashes, a cow attack, a firefighter injured while responding to a grain bin fire, and a person run over by unidentified farm equipment. Among cases where age was recorded, victims ranged from 2 to 74 years old, while gender was documented in 27 of the 37 cases, including 20 males and 7 females. As in previous years, most of these incidents received little or no media coverage, and even severe non-fatal farm injuries are not subject to mandatory reporting, underscoring the continued need for a comprehensive trauma registry to more accurately track farm-related injuries and support prevention efforts.

Based on earlier studies of non-fatal, farm-related injuries, it is estimated that approximately one in every nine farms experiences an injury each year that requires emergency medical treatment. This highlights the continued importance of first aid training for farm families and agricultural workers.

Summary of Amish/Old Order Buggy-related Incidents

Indiana has the third largest Amish/Old Order population in the U.S., and this demographic group is growing faster than the general population. This community relies heavily on horse drawn buggies and implements and continues to experience a growing number of buggy and motor vehicle collisions. Compared with crashes involving only motor vehicles, these buggy collisions result in a disproportionate number of fatalities. Table 5 describes 8 documented incidents that occurred in 2025, resulting in 14 injuries and eight fatalities. The ages of victims ranged from 2 to 75 years. It is believed that there may be additional unreported incidents.

Currently, Indiana state law requires red flashing lights on horse drawn vehicles used on roadways after dark. Most, but not all, Amish/Old Order communities have adapted the use of the SMV emblem. In some cases, the use of the lights and SMV emblems are inconsistent with strongly held religious beliefs.

Table 5. Description of 2025 Amish buggy-related incidents

Date	County	Description	Injury	Fatality
4/9/2025	Marshall	Buggy-motor vehicle collision	0	3
6/30/2025	Marshall	Buggy-motor vehicle collision	0	2
7/10/2025	Elkhart	Buggy-motor vehicle collision	1	0
7/25/2025	Adams	Buggy rear-end injury crash	2	0
9/26/2025	Elkhart	Buggy head-on crash	1	0
10/7/2025	Adams	Buggy mass-injury crash	9	0
12/2/2025	LaGrange	Buggy-motor vehicle collision	0	2
12/20/2025	LaGrange	Buggy-motor vehicle collision	1	1

From 2016 to 2025, 238 buggy-related accidents were documented in Indiana, resulting in 28 fatalities. Most of the incidents involved a collision between a motor vehicle and a buggy, and many resulted in multiple victims. It should be noted that this type of occurrence is under reported and access to incident reports may be difficult to obtain. There is a need to give more attention to incidents involving Amish/Old Order horse-drawn vehicles on public roadways, as well as farm work-related injuries among this population.

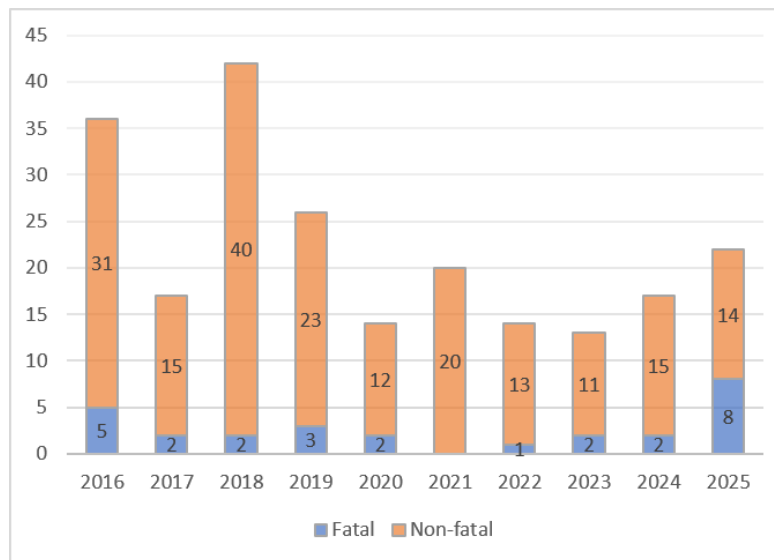


Figure 5. Amish buggy-related incidents, 2016-2025

The Changing Agricultural Workforce

The increase in small farms is a significant shift in rural communities. Part-time or hobby farmers, including agritourism operations, have distinct educational needs compared to large commercial operations. Recent fatality data indicates that these smaller farms account for a disproportionately high number of deaths, often due to the use of older, less safe machinery like tractors without ROPS. In some cases, horses are considered as a "greener" alternative to tractors, without recognizing that horses were once a leading cause of farm-related fatalities.

Recent claims of growing numbers of women serving as owner/operators of Indiana farms are not borne out by any corresponding increase in the number of women dying or being injured in farm work. Historically over 95% of all farm workplace fatalities have been male. Given that an estimated 5,600⁹ principal farm operators in Indiana are female, a larger number of fatalities or work-related injuries involving women could be expected if all these women were actually engaged in production-related activities. Over the past ten years, 18 of the 263 documented fatalities (6.8%) involved women. None were recorded in 2019, one each in 2020, 2021, and 2024, and three in 2025.

Incidents Involving Agricultural Confined Spaces

Since 1978, Purdue University has been documenting agricultural confined space incidents throughout the United States. About 2,477 cases have been documented and entered into Purdue's Agricultural Confined Spaces Incident Database. For an annual summary of these incidents visit www.agconfinedspaces.org.

Indiana ranks number one historically in the number of documented grain entrapments. In 2025 there was one documented fatal entrapment and 5 nonfatal, successful rescues. It is believed that Indiana's high national ranking for this type of fatality has more to do with the aggressive nature of Purdue's on-going surveillance efforts in the state over the past 40 years rather than the actual number of incidents that occur in other states.

Farmer Suicides

There continues to be strong interest in addressing the problem of farmer suicides. Substantial investments have been made to raise awareness of the problem and increase resources available through rural mental health

⁹ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=INDIANA

clinics, County Extension Offices, rural churches, and Secondary Agriculture Educators. For example, an instructional unit covering the impact of farm stress on youth has been developed for the “Gearing Up for Safety: Agricultural Production Safety for Youth” curriculum available at www.agsafetyforyouth.info. A new national suicide prevention toll-free line (988) was implemented in July 2022, with trained professionals available to assist callers through difficult times. There remains, however, no reliable data to suggest that Indiana farmers are at a significantly higher risk of suicide than the general population. However, it remains appropriate to continue giving attention to the mental and behavioral health of farm families, especially considering the difficult economic conditions, increased presence of alcohol and drugs in the agricultural workplace, and decline in rural health care services.

INPrepared.org

Beyond the introduction of safer technology, two of the most significant contributors to the reduction in Indiana’s farm-related fatalities have been the increased capabilities of rural emergency first responders and rapid access to high-quality emergency medical services. Injuries that were not survivable 20 or 30 years ago are being successfully addressed by better-trained first responders and rapid deployment of air transport medical services.

To further enhance the capacity of Indiana’s farm and rural families to respond to typical emergencies, PUASHP has developed and promoted the www.INPrepared.org website. This tool is designed to enable users to be better prepared for responding to and recovering from potentially harmful events. One critical preparation activity that is being encouraged is to complete a “Stop-the-Bleed” training that has demonstrated success in preventing loss of life due to blood loss. More families need to be trained in basic first aid training, including knowing to call 911 right away in cases of serious injury, entrapment, or entanglement.

Conclusion

Farm safety and health may not consistently receive prominent media coverage, legislative attention, or broad public support. However, no fewer than 1,619 Indiana farm families have experienced the loss of a family member since 1970, including the 17 in 2025. For each affected family, the consequences of such a loss are significant and lasting.

If you are interested in learning more or supporting the work of Purdue’s Agricultural Safety and Health Program, please feel free to call 765-494-1191 or visit www.farmsafety.org.

Other online resources that may be helpful include:

- www.agrability.org
- www.agconfinedspaces.org
- www.youtube.com/USagCenters
- www.farmsafety.org
- http://www.agsafetyforyouth.info/
- www.necasag.org
- www.inprepared.org