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Research points to most effective agricultural health, safety mobile apps

Mobile applications put a world of agricultural health and safety information at the user's fingertips, but which apps are most useful?

Researchers at the National Farm Medicine Center led development and testing of an evaluation framework to help judge the overall worth of a mobile app. Their findings appear in the current issue of the Journal of Agromedicine. A pre-publication draft of the manuscript is available here.

Mobile apps are computer applications that run on devices such as smartphones and tablets. Agricultural safety apps can help farmers and employees measure sound levels, find the proper angle for a ladder, access heat safety tools and carry out many other tasks more safely.

"Mobile technology is becoming an important part of injury and illness prevention in agriculture," said co-author Aaron Yoder, Ph.D., president of the International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health and assistant professor, University of Nebraska Medical Center. "As safety and health professionals, it is important that we provide guidance on the best tools to use."

The team developed a rubric, or scoring guide, that evaluates app elements such as content, relevance, value, confidentiality, technical performance and usability. The rubric may also have value for general use in assessing apps related to health and safety in other fields.

"We also trust that mobile app developers will find this evaluation framework insightful and practical," said lead author Iris Reyes, M.P.H., an epidemiologist with the National Farm Medicine Center.

The Journal of Agromedicine website contains searchable, archived abstracts from current and past issues.

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