

2021 Wisconsin Farm Related Fatalities

A COLLABORATION OF UW DIVISION OF EXTENSION AND THE NATIONAL FARM MEDICINE CENTER

INTRODUCTION

Each year, a summary of Wisconsin farm fatalities is compiled to help identify the hazards and risks for people who work in agriculture. This report includes fatalities from agriculture-related hazards for the year 2021. Fatalities from naturally occurring health events or underlying conditions, such as heart attack or stroke, or recreational or home-related activities, are not included.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fatalities	34	40	28	35

NOTE: Since 2017, farm fatality reports differ from BLS data summaries due to the inclusion of children, bystanders, non-farm motorists, and other public roadway incidents involving agricultural operations.

TYPES OF FATALITIES

Thirty-five fatalities were recorded in 2021. Using the **Farm and Agricultural Injury Classification (FAIC)**¹ code allows researchers and others to identify and categorize occupational cases and unique exposures, such as non-working children and bystanders injured in work environments.

Injury Classification	Number
Farm Production Work	17
Farm Tractors, Machines, Tools, Equipment	1
Roadway Collision	7
Agricultural Support (e.g. farm mechanic)	1
Unable to determine	9

EVENTS THAT LED TO FARM FATALITIES

Machinery hazards are a significant source of injuries. Farm equipment conditions and the presence of safety devices such as shields or rollover protection vary widely. Even with “safe” equipment, unexpected events and improper operation can lead to injury. Blunt trauma, such as from equipment that falls while it is being repaired, trees, and equipment runovers, led to 14 fatalities.

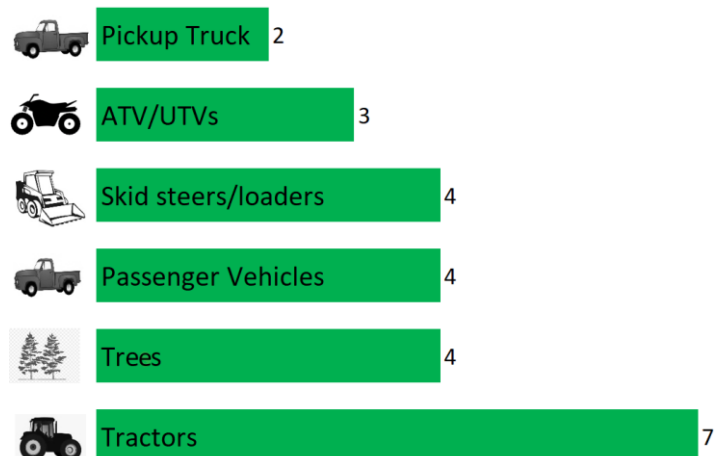
Transportation, such as operating a tractor on a public roadway, led to 9 fatalities. This includes non-farm motorists injured in collisions with ag-related vehicles. Seven fatalities occurred on public roadways. Five cases were caused by falls from barns, sheds, silos, and other

structures. Crushing injuries, such as those between the arms of a skid loader, caused 4 fatalities.

Injury Event	Number
Blunt Trauma	14
On-road Transportation	7
Off-road Transportation	2
Falls	5
Crushing Injuries	4
Fire	1
Machine Entanglement	1
Other	1

BLUNT TRAUMA INCIDENTS

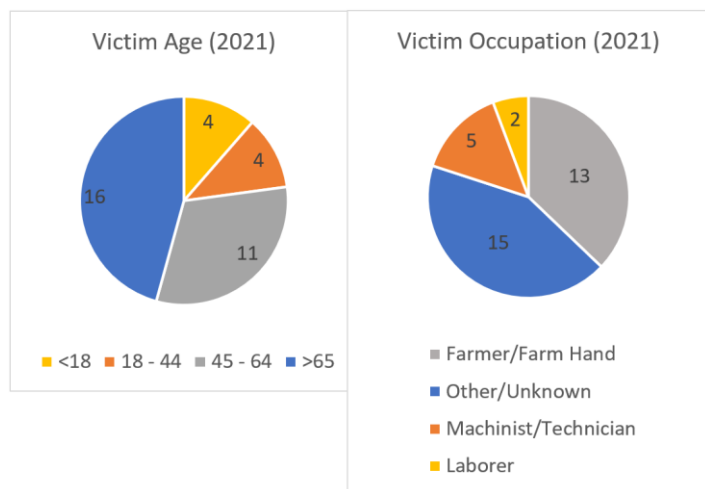
Blunt trauma incidents involving agricultural equipment led to 14 fatalities in 2021, 40% of all farm fatalities. This includes five victims who were farmers, three machinists/technicians, and two children under the age of 13. Of blunt trauma cases, 5 (36%) involved being run over by tractors, 4 (29%) involved trees/logs, and 2 (14%) involved being run over by UTVs being used for farm work. Of transportation cases, 2 (22%) each involved pickup trucks, large trucks, and passenger vehicles.



SOURCE OF INJURY

Roadway collisions pose a threat to farmers as well as to non-farm motor vehicle operators and passengers. Tractors were the major source of fatalities, with 7 victims. Skid

steers and collisions involving passenger vehicles each fatally injured 4 individuals. Falling trees and logs from events such as clearing trees from a farm fencerow with a tractor fatally injured 4 victims. ATVs and UTVs used while performing a farm task fatally injured 3 victims, and pickup trucks fatally injured 2 individuals.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Thirty-three of the victims (94%) were male, and 2 were female. Persons aged 65 and over constituted the largest number of victims, with 16 individuals (46%), while 4 were under 18 (11%), and 4 were between 18 and 44 (11%). Of the victims with known occupations, 13 were primarily farmers. Outside of farming occupations, victims included two general farm laborers, five machinists, and a mix of other ag service professions. Note: The authors of this factsheet documented several suicide events involving those reported as farmers. These events are not included in the data described. If you have concerns for yourself or others, including thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-273-8255, and consider locating a "QPR" suicide prevention training course in your community.

AREAS OF INTEREST – UTV and ATV FATALITIES

This farm fatality data analysis project was not designed to study incidents involving all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) or utility task vehicles (UTVs) when the incident was not related to agricultural work. However, we have consistently noted several fatalities to farmers and others each year as ATVs and UTVs were being used in recreational settings, on the highway for transportation, or in other rural, non-farming uses. The Wisconsin DNR maintains summaries and annual reports of

ATV incidents at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/ATV/CrashInfo>

Wisconsin has specific ATV/UTV safety certification course requirements for operators on "public riding areas" such as trails or other permitted county or forest lands. Operation of ATVs/UTVs on roadways is restricted only to designated and marked as ATV/UTV routes by local governments with specific safety requirements and speed limits. Because of the documented dangers associated with ATV/UTV use for any purpose, make sure to carefully review and comply with all appropriate state regulations and requirements.

IMPACT OF FARM FATALITIES

Nationally, workers in agriculture and closely related industries are up to 7 times more likely to die on the job than workers in other industries.² Farming remains among the most dangerous jobs in the U.S., with an annual fatality rate of 20.9/100,000 full-time working individuals compared to an all-industry rate of 3.3/100,000.² A 2024 study examined the economic impact of U.S. farm injuries and deaths for farm operators, agricultural workers, and society. This study estimated total costs at \$11.3 billion in 2024 dollars, representing an annual cost burden of 10%-15% of net farm income.³

ABOUT OUR DATA

Data sources included Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Bureau of Health Information death certificate registry; clippings from Wisconsin daily and weekly newspapers collected and collated via AgInjuryNews.org.

REFERENCES

1. D J Murphy, M Purschwitz, B S Mahoney, and A F Hoskin Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Pennsylvania State University, University Park 16802. "A proposed classification code for farm and agricultural injuries.", *American Journal of Public Health* 83, no. 5 (May 1, 1993): pp. 736-738.
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2024. Number and rate of fatal work injuries, by selected private industries. <https://www.bls.gov/charts/census-of-fatal-occupational-injuries/number-and-rate-of-fatal-work-injuries-by-industry.htm>
3. Adhikari, S., Wilson, F., & Rautiainen, R. (2024). Cost of agricultural injuries in the United States: Estimates based on surveillance, insurance, and government statistics. *American journal of industrial medicine*, 67(9), 801–812. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23628>

SUGGESTED CITATION

Weichert B., Aby G.R., Shutske J. 2021 Wisconsin Farm Related Fatalities. Marshfield, WI. Marshfield Clinic Research Institute; 2025.



GET MORE INFORMATION

CALL: 1-800-662-6900

EMAIL: nfmcsh@mcrf.mfldclin.edu

VISIT: marshfieldclinic.org/nfmc



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Supported by grant UL1TR002373 from the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, NIH. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH.