

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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Growing up on a farm has instilled values and the working skills that I plan to utilize in pursuing my career interests to achieve my life goals. My plans include returning to my family's farm and continuing the heritage of agriculture laid down by family before me. By choice, I plan to be a steward of the land with the hopes that my own children and their children may have the same opportunity to work the same small family farm. My parents have always instilled in me the safety aspects of various farm tasks. To this point, I have been fortunate around tractors and the many implements we may use. I was able to participate in and complete the OSHA 10 Hour General Industry Agriculture safety program during the Spring semester of my Junior year at Person High School in Roxboro, North Carolina. While working through the safety modules, I had many opportunities to look back and remember that I had been lucky in a few instances around the farm in recent years. Since the course, I find myself paying particular attention to where I put my hands, how I use our equipment and watching out for others. Three ideas come to mind when I think of how completing the OSHA course has changed my perception of safety around our own farm.

Fire safety was not a huge concern in our shop area until I participated in the OSHA Agricultural safety program. In our shop, liquids, oils, greases and preservatives were scattered about throughout the shop. Some near our wood heater and others near welding and torch equipment. The CareerSafe fire safety module opened my eyes in our own shop and I convinced my parents to invest in several fire safe storage cabinets to place all liquids and flammable materials in. Today, our shop is a safer place to work in.

Another important area is tractor PTO safety. Our farm had a grain auger without a PTO shaft safety cover. I guess, since it was hardly ever used anymore, Dad felt that a new safety cover was a bad investment. After studying tractor safety with OSHA and reinforcing PTO safety in my agricultural class, I shared some videos of PTO accidents via videos with dad and grandad. Dad agreed and let me place the PTO shaft safety cover on the grain auger. I also replaced a worn and partially torn cover on one of our rear cutters. My parents were relieved this past summer when part of my responsibilities was to bush hog around fields that put me by myself for hours in outlying parts of our farm. With the new PTO shaft safety cover in place on the rear cutter that I usually use off by myself, everyone felt better about my own safety.

Another area of concern on safety with our farm was one tractor that has a factory ROPS installed with a broken seat belt that would not hook correctly. A possibility existed with that tractor, if turned over, being trapped or entangled under the tractor or the ROPS itself. I had learned with OSHA tractor safety how important the use of a seatbelt in conjunction with a ROPS system. We have several older, smaller cultivator-style tractors with no ROPS that I have a better chance getting away if it does tip over. OSHA 10-hour agricultural safety instilled the importance in me to have a working seat belt on every tractor that has a ROPS. My parents and I replaced the seatbelt on that tractor in question. Many times, before OSHA tractor safety I simply ignored wearing the seatbelt but, now my seatbelt is always attached before I start the tractor.

In conclusion, having participated in the OSHA 10 hour agriculture safety program has made me look at several things differently around my own family farm. Convincing my parents to make some changes will improve the safety for our family in the future. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in this program in my Career and Technical Education Agricultural Mechanics course. I am grateful for everything I was introduced to in the course and could only wish all high schools everywhere could be involved in such a program of safety. I know this course has had an impact on me because now I do pay more attention to everything I do around our farm. I will include all these safety aspects in my "tool belt of knowledge: in my own future and will share with my children so they can do so as well. Thank you for the life changing opportunities.