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## Tractor Safety Using the SC ROPS Program

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## Tractor Safety Using the SC ROPS Program

### Abstract

The South Carolina ROPS Program was developed to increase awareness of safety issues associated with tractor rollovers and tractor-vehicle collisions, provide education on the safe operation of tractors, and determine if the program developed at the University of Kentucky could be adapted to other states. The project used and evaluated agricultural safety programming material that was developed by the University of Kentucky's Community Partners for Healthy Farming ROPS Project. The project had an impact on the participants in that many adopted safer working practices.

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## Background

The South Carolina ROPS Project was a joint effort among Clemson University, South Carolina State University, and the University of Kentucky. The project's goals were to increase awareness of safety issues associated with tractor rollovers and tractor-vehicle collisions, provide education on the safe operation of tractors, and to determine if the program developed at the University of Kentucky could be adapted to other states.

One of the first criteria was to develop a notebook specifically for South Carolina. The five components were, "Mr. Good Egg Farmer," "Photos of Fatal and Non-Fatal Tractor Overturns," "How to Get a ROPS," "Agricultural Safety PSAs," and "Facts about Tractor/Motor Vehicle Collisions." "Mr. Good Egg," "Photos," "How to Get a ROPS," and the "PSAs" exercises were slightly modified to include South Carolina injury and fatality data rather than that of Kentucky. "Facts about Tractor/Motor Vehicle Collisions" was not modified. An evaluation for the "Photos" exercise was also developed because no formal evaluation was previously developed by Kentucky.

The "Mr. Good Egg Farmer" simulation exercise uses a simple apparatus, scale model tractors and raw hens' eggs (simulates tractor operators) to demonstrate the consequences of overturns without a ROPS and the protection provided by ROPS and seat belts. "Photos of Fatal and Non-Fatal Tractor Overturns" exercise uses a set of ten 8 X 10-inch color photos of overturned tractors. People are asked to examine the photos, describe what happened, and discuss the consequences. Brief factual information is provided for each event depicted in the photographs.

"Facts About Tractor/Motor Vehicle Collisions" is a collection of facts and stories about highway collisions between tractors and motor vehicles. Large graphs and charts show the most common types of collisions and when they occur. True stories reveal the circumstances and consequences of the collisions and the protection provided by ROPS and seat belts.

Inservice training on the SC ROPS Program was conducted for county agents from Clemson University and South Carolina State University. The material developed in the SC ROPS notebook

was presented and discussed. The three interactive programs were demonstrated and discussions followed on how to use this information at county meetings. The other two programs, "How to Get a ROPS" and the "PSAs," were also discussed as to how they could be used within the county and at county meetings.

## Results

Thirteen meetings were held during the evaluation stages of the SC ROPS Project. The total number of individuals who were directly exposed to the SC ROPS Program was approximately 500 people, ranging from agricultural education students to elderly farmers (Table 1.)

**Table 1.**  
Participants in SC ROPS

County Area (Cluster)	Participants
Aiken	102 (high school students to elderly farmers)
Anderson	80 (high school students to elderly farmers)
Clarendon	229 (various farm groups/producer meetings)
Colleton	78 (various farm groups)

## Impact

SMV emblems were installed on the tractors used in the various agricultural programs in the schools from this work. The teachers in the schools commented that this material would be a great addition to the existing agricultural safety lessons. The 4-H Camp upgraded to get a tractor already equipped with a ROPS to replace the non-ROPS tractor because of this project and the interest in tractor safety.

One agent's comment was "We ought to practice what we preach." One agent reported that 8-10 farmers replaced or added new SMV (slow moving vehicle) emblems to their equipment after attending one of the meetings. A farmer who attended a meeting on "Tractor/Motor Vehicle Collisions" went back to his farm and replaced the damaged and broken lighting on his tractor. A tractor rollover death occurred during the course of the project in the Aiken County area and made a strong impression on the participants in that community.

A female participant at one meeting asked the question "How many of us wear our seat belts while on ROPS equipped tractors?" Not one hand was raised. The evaluations show that some now will begin to use seat belts after participating in this activity. Other comments included:

- "I will attempt to convince the men to get ROPS and wear their seat belts." (Female)
- "I will wear my seat belt from now on. I do use my car seat belt all the time." (Female)

## Discussion

The program achieved its original goals based on the comments received from both the county agents working on this project and the participants in the program activities. The program provided awareness and educational instruction as to how to operate a tractor safely and what one can do to insure the well being of the operator of a tractor:

- Equip tractors with ROPS,
- Wear seatbelt on ROPS equipped tractors, and
- Equip tractors with proper markings when operating equipment on roadways.

The program was viewed as a well packaged program that is a valuable resource for all counties and can save lives. Plans are underway to take the SC ROPS Program statewide based on suggestions from the participating agents. This is a program that can be easily modified for any state.

The agents regarded the "Mr. Good Egg Farmer" exercise as one more suitable for youth. They did not feel comfortable using it with adult groups. "Photos of Fatal and Non-Fatal Tractor Overturns" was the most used component. The agents used this program for both oral presentations and displays at county meetings. This program has made its way into surrounding counties due to other agents' interest.

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