Mr. J.C. Blakeney, Assistant State Forester, has sufficiently stated the purpose of the Farm Safety Committee, and therefore, it is not necessary for me to elaborate on the necessity and value of this organization. I will pass on by saying that your accomplishments are of vital importance, and I urge you to carry on the high purposes for which you were organized.

Agriculture has been from the beginning of the state's history the foundation of its economy. The citizens of South Carolina more than those of many other states should be interested and working in an effort to reduce the annual loss due to farm accidents. Every accident that is prevented is money saved, but a more important factor is the preservation of life and manpower.

There are many distinctive conditions surrounding farming that do not exist in other industries.

The mechanical equipment and machinery used in cities, and the hazards of fire are all closely supervised by highly trained personnel available throughout the working day. This does not apply to rural life. Each farm family is an individual unit. No law, no supervisory officials, no public regulations govern safety on the farm. It is an individual matter and an individual responsibility, therefore, each individual must be reached with the latest and most enlightening information about where and how accidents are most likely to occur. This condition, more than anything else, stresses the importance of a co-ordinated program promoted by all agencies represented in conducting an effective farm safety program for South Carolina.

Approximately 15,000 fatal accidents to rural people occur annually, and over a million and one-half farm people are injured each year. More accidents result from farm work than from any other of fifteen major industries in the United States. Let me briefly analyze and enumerate the most frequent types of accidents. They can be roughly divided into two groups:
First, those resulting from mechanical causes, such as improperly guarded machinery, defective tools and unsafe building construction. It is interesting to notice that six out of every ten accidents with machinery are associated with engine propelled machinery, autos, tractors, trucks and combines. Another distinctive yet real hazard is livestock. Eight out of every ten accidents from livestock can be charged to horses and mules. Buzz saws, axes and falling trees are another source of injury and loss of manpower.

In the second category, we will place those accidents resulting from personal causes, such as carelessness, recklessness, ignorance and other human failings. The National Fire Protection Association reported that approximately thirty five hundred persons are burned to death in farm fires each year. These fires cost over $90,000,000.00 excluding the potential loss from death and disability. Farm buildings are particularly susceptible to loss by fire due to the lack of protection by organized fire departments and good water supply systems. Farm buildings are constructed to a large extent of wood. Hay, grain and many other foodstuffs, which are stored in these buildings, are readily ignitable and burn freely.

Our agricultural wealth is in both human and natural resources. The safe guarding of the priceless human resources and the protection of the vast natural resources are the soundest possible business investment for the farmer, for his family, the community and the state. It is essential to the happiness and well being of our farm population that a minimum loss in man hours, equipment, and produce be realized. Frequently farmers are insufficiently protected and covered by insurance, and one fire or one accident can easily deprive a rural family of its total annual output. When we fully comprehend the importance and extent of this problem, the work of this committee grows in statute, and takes its rightful place as one of the most
needed efforts in the state.

What can we do to prevent farm accidents and reduce this great loss to our rural people and their economy. First, there should be a widespread and co-ordinated effort to inform farmers of the hazards which they are likely to encounter in every day farm life. We must make the rural people accident conscious. The farmers must be aware of the danger of improperly guarded and defective machinery. As mechanized farming is introduced, many of the dangers associated with factories and industries will be introduced on the farm. It is the farmer’s duty to study his potential hazards whether they be mechanical or personal, and to take appropriate steps to eliminate them. Unlike the factory worker, the farm worker lives at his place of business and is exposed to the hazards of his occupation long hours of the day, and every day in the week. He must be his own inspector, safety engineer, fireman and police official.

Farmers have always been the forerunners of civilization and faced with the hazards of pioneering. Through long inheritance, daring has become pretty well fixed as a habit. They are notably fearless and courageous. In farm operations, however, the habit of daring oftentimes leads to serious accidents, and the rural population should be educated to realize that reasonable caution against mishaps should be a part of the daily routine. The facts concerning farm hazards should be presented and impressed upon our rural population. This can be done through rural schools, 4-H Clubs, Vocational Agricultural students, and our vast number of rural publications. Farmers are widely separated and are difficult to reach. Therefore, every facility must be used to disseminate information as to accident prevention. This is part of the work and the end of the Farm Safety Committee, the importance of which I cannot under emphasize. Your work is of real tangible importance, and I extend to you my complete cooperation and wish you success in your endeavor.