



RECENT INJURIES & DEATHS IN NORTH CAROLINA

- At least sixteen workers from a blueberry processing center in Ammon were taken to a hospital on Thursday, and treated for exposure to carbon monoxide.
<http://www.brentadams.com/blog/bladen-blueberry-farm-workers-seriously-ill.cfm>
- A farmworker was run over by a tractor and killed while working in the Shawboro area of Currituck County.
<http://hamptonroads.com/2010/11/north-carolina-farmworker-killed-tractor-accident>
- A migrant worker attempting to clear tobacco clogging a mechanical harvester was accidentally pulled in and killed early Thursday, Columbus County Coroner Linwood Cartrette said Friday.
<http://farmworkersforum.wordpress.com/2011/08/07/migrant-worker-killed-in-columbus-county-farm-accident/>
- **Juan Jose Soriano** died of heat stroke while harvesting tobacco in Wayne County on August 1, 2006. The NC Department of Labor (NCDOL) investigation found that "the employer did not furnish to each of his employees conditions of employment and a place of employment free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees, in that employees were exposed to heat-related hazards without adequate provisions to protect them." The investigation also found that "12 migrant farmworkers were exposed to heat indices of 105-110 degrees without the opportunity to adequately hydrate or cool down" and that subsequently one worker died of hyperthermia. The grower has contested the findings and the proposed penalty of \$2100. The Workers' Compensation claim is currently denied by the grower's insurance carrier. At the time of death Juan Jose Soriano had 5 children, 3 under the age of 18.
- **Samuel Burnett**, age 62, died of heat stroke in Harnett County. African American male, no citation issued.
- **Rito Meza Castillo**, age 59, worked in Harnett County and died of heat stroke on July 18, 2005, just two weeks after arriving in North Carolina. At the time of death Rito Meza-Castillo had 8 children all over the age of 18. His widow lives with some of her children and is being supported by her children. For close to a year after Rito's death, Rito's widow received checks of around \$50 every week from the insurance company, which argued that this was two-thirds of Rito's weekly salary. The case was settled for \$75,000 awaiting approval from the North Carolina Industrial Commission.
- **Pablo Ordaz**, age 39, was working in Person County when he died of heat stroke on/around July 22, 2005. His body was found two days after he disappeared. According to Pablo's five co-workers, he died due to the employer's negligence and failure to provide medical attention to Pablo. An investigation by the NC Department of Labor found that the grower: did not provide adequate drinking water to employees, and specifically that he discouraged and reprimanded workers for stopping and drinking water. One former co-worker has reported that he was reprimanded for drinking water shortly before Pablo's death. At the time of death, Pablo Ordaz had 2 children, both under the age of 18 and his wife was pregnant, the baby was born in October of 2005 and then died in December 2005. His widow is currently working and providing for the youngest of the surviving children. The older son is now over the age of 18 and not living at home.
- **Name unknown:** A Caucasian farmworker died of heat stroke on a Robeson County melon farm on July 27, 2005.
- **Mario Meneses Jael** died towards the end of the season in 2005 in Johnston County. Mario Meneses Jael left his wife, one daughter in "secundaria," or middle school, and one son in "primaria," or elementary school. Their extended family has been helping them survive, since Mario's death, in N.C. The widow works when she can find work, but they are struggling. Mario's worker's compensation claim is still pending. His cousin, Jose Ventura, comments: "it's difficult, when someone goes to Carolina and comes home in a box."
- **Carlitos Candelario Herrera, Jesus Navarrete and Violeta Rueda Meza:** In late 2004 and early 2005, three babies with severe birth defects were born to women employed by tomato producer AgMart. The women had worked both in North Carolina and in Florida and were illegally sprayed with pesticides by AgMart operators. Carlitos was born on December 17, 2004 without any arms or legs. Jesus was born on February 4, 2005 with an underdeveloped jaw and tongue that falls back into the throat. Violeta was born on February 6, 2005 with a missing ear and no visible sex organs. She died three days after birth.



CHILD DEATHS IN THE FIELDS (NATIONWIDE)

There have been 31 cases of work-related fatalities in agriculture among youth ages 11–17 in the state of North Carolina during a 19-year period. Since 2000, seven young workers have been killed at work in NC.

- In July 2011, Jade Garza and Hannah Kendall, both 14 years old and from Sterling, Illinois died after coming in contact with a field irrigator while working at removing tassels from corn.
- In March 2011, two teens, Nicholas Bledsoe, 19, and Justin Eldridge, 18, were working at their after school job at a farm in Okawville, Illinois when they were electrocuted as a pole they were carrying touched a power line, killing them both.
- In September 2010 in Minden Iowa, 18-year-old John Martin Dea tried to roll start a tractor he was driving by going down a hill. The tractor began to bounce, went out of control, and rolled over on a terrace. Dea was thrown from the tractor during the incident and killed.
- In late August 2010 in Etna Green, Indiana, 13-year-old Wyman Miller, a member of an Amish community, was tending to some horse when he was apparently struck or crushed by the horses. He died of blunt force trauma.
- In July 2010 in Middleville, Michigan, 18-year-old Victor Perez and 17-year-old Francisco M. Martinez died after falling into a silo they were power washing.
- David Yenni, a 13-year-old was killed in a grain loading accident at a Petaluma, California mill in August 2009. The boy, who was working with his father, climbed on top of an open trailer for unknown reasons just as the father was emptying it into an underground storage tank. Somehow he became trapped in the funneling material. Would-be rescuers were able to grab his arm but could not free him from the grain until it was too late.
- In May 2009, Cody Rigsby, a Colorado 17-year-old was working in a grain bin when he vanished. It took rescuers six hours to find his body.
- While driving a tractor as he loaded stone in Skaneateles, N.Y. in October 2008, John Rice, 16, lost control. The tractor began rolling backwards down a hill. The tractor overturned, ejecting Rice, running him over and causing critical injuries that nearly killed him.
- In September 2008, Jacob Kruwell, age 14, was driving a tractor in Lake Mills, Wisconsin when the tractor's wheels went off the pavement, causing the load it was carrying to shift and flip the tractor which landed on top of the boy, killing him.
- Matthew Helmick, 16, died when the tractor he was driving overturned on the farm that his family owned in Doylestown, Ohio in August 2008. According to reports, Helmick was turning the tractor into a driveway and made the turn too fast, hitting an embankment and causing the tractor to flip. He was pinned underneath the vehicle.
- A 15-year-old boy, Michael Paul Young, died in June 2008 on a Western Kentucky farm as he worked beside his father and brothers. Young fell into a truck load of grain that acted like quicksand. He sank into the grain and died of asphyxiation before his family and fellow workers could rescue him.
- In May 2008, Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez, a 17-year-old farmworker died of heat stroke after working nine and a half hours in a California vineyard as temperatures hovered in the mid-90s. Jimenez was pregnant at the time. According to the United Farm Workers and the girl's family, the labor contractor in the vineyard ignored California laws that require workers to be given breaks and provided with shade. Workers also said they were not given adequate amounts of water.
- Edilberto Cardenas, 17, died in a Groveland, Florida citrus grove in January 2008—his first day on the job. Cardenas was emptying bags of oranges into a truck when then truck backed up and ran him over.



- In December 2006, a 10-year-old Florida youth accidentally ran over his 2-year-old brother while driving a pickup truck in a Florida orange grove. The boy had been driving trucks in the fields since he was only 8 years old.
- In January, 2011, a seven-year-old boy in Great Bend, Kansas was helping his parents feed cattle when he was accidentally run over by a tractor.
- On December 29, 2010 in Arcanum, Ohio, 16-year-old John Warner was spreading manure on a frozen corn field when his outer clothing became entangled in the power take-off shaft and in a matter of seconds he was dead.
- In Fairfax, Virginia, last August, 17-year-old Gregory Malsam was helping a neighbor trim trees when he came in contact with a 19,000-volt power line. He suffered massive internal injuries and died instantly.
- In July, 2010, 12-year-old Luke Hahn was performing landscaping work with his father at a Tree Farm in Bushkill Township, Pennsylvania when the boy backed a dump truck into the valve of an underground propane tank, creating an explosion that killed him and critically injured his father.
- That same month, two workers — Alejandro Pacas, 19, and Wyatt Whitebread, 14 — suffocated in a grain bin in Mount Carroll, Illinois. Their deaths occurred in a matter of seconds as they were engulfed in grain.