

CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | SUMMER 2015



Jeff Simon from DOT Safety Plus giving a hands-on presentation about safety checks at the March WCO safety event.

Safety Certification Program a Success!

This past March, nearly 50 people attended the first ever WCO safety certification program event held at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton. A certification program has been a goal for WCO basically since the organization began, and this event represented years of brainstorming and months of hard work.

The folks who attended the event listened to speakers on the following topics: safety checks, safety on the road, safety in the field and how to handle emergencies. Each session emphasized real-world scenarios and tools that could be implemented right away. Next year's event date has already been set for Friday, March 18, 2016 – Please save the date.

Safety is one of the cornerstones of WCO. Unfortunately, accidents happen but studies show that participation in incident-reduction focused seminars helps to reduce incident rates. Safety meetings are not as interesting as new

equipment sessions, but they work – and keep people safe and alive. At the WCO board meeting following the certification, almost all operator-directors around the table had been involved in a fatality while on the job. The dangers of custom operation are real.

The “certification” aspect of the safety program is designed to give WCO members a competitive edge. Farmers have choices when it comes to services, and we all know instances where a professional operator is “undercut” by a “fly-by-night” outfit. Our hope is that you can use your certification credentials as evidence to your professionalism and commitment to operating lawfully and safely. Everyone who attended received a “WCO Certified” sticker in the mail – please display it with pride!

Insurance incentives are also an element that is important to the WCO Safety Certification Program. Keeping

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Forage Symposium
January 25-27, 2016
Chula Vista Resort
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

WCO Safety Certification Program
Friday, March 18, 2016
Appleton, Wisconsin

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From the President's Cab

By Kathy Vander Kinter



Greetings and Happy Forage Harvesting! What started out as an amazingly ideal year (soil conditions, weather) to get crops planted here in Northeast Wisconsin has quickly turned to saturation point. Our April showers have arrived!

Hopefully your harvesting has been going well and has been a safe profitable one thus far. I will keep my column brief as there is never a lack of things to be done this time of year.

With planting season wrapped up and on to the harvesting of alfalfa and winter forages, the Implement of Husbandry Laws are in place, WCO is interested in hearing your stories. How has the new law affected your day-to-day operation if at all? Have new issues arisen stemming from the permitting process? Has law enforcement been easy to work with? Are you interested in hearing more about other ways to file for permits? The Safety and Regulations committee would like to hear from you on your experiences.

This leads me to my next thought. It is time to start thinking about our winter conference in January 2016. Let us know by phone or email if there are any topics that may have come up over the summer months that should be addressed at the Symposium. The education committee strives to bring our members the latest and greatest or to discuss the not so great happenings and tools in the industry. Your feedback will drive our portion of the conference to the next level!

One idea that is usually brought up every year at our conference is pricing and what other operators are charging around the state. WCO is working to develop a survey that is tailored to custom operators and includes more relevant statistics than prior surveys. Differentiation in fuel cost, pricing by the hour, acre and tonnage will also be addressed. The survey is still in the very early stages - as a WCO member, you can voice your opinion on what is included or omitted from this survey! I urge you to use this opportunity to your benefit and contact me or Maria with your ideas. All ideas are welcome and will make the survey a success for us as custom operators.

Take time to enjoy the harvest and be safe as always!

-Kathy

2015 Certification, Cont. from p. 1

your crew (and yourself!) safe is the motivation for participation, and saving money is a bonus. Chubb Insurance is the only company that has committed publically to providing discounts for WCO Certified operators, but there are many other companies who will consider participation in loss-prevention programs when writing policies.

Make sure to read the article in this issue about how to approach your insurance company about discounts.

A special thank you to everyone who came out to support the event. Please feel free to offer your feedback by email at execdir@wiscustomoperators.org or (608) 577 4345.

If not you, then who?

WCO seeks corporate and at-large directors

Have you thought about getting more involved in WCO? This is your chance! WCO is looking for Board of Director nominations. Elections will take place at this year's annual meeting on January 27, 2016, held in conjunction with the Symposium event at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Directors must be members of WCO and serve three year terms and with no more than two consecutive terms. WCO board members work to support the efforts and activities of the organization including member and

sponsor recruitment, program development and relationships with related groups. As a Director, board members are expected to attend quarterly meetings and actively serve on at least one committee. Committees include: scholarship, education, safety, media, membership and special projects. This year, WCO members will elect a corporate and at-large director. If you are interested in a position on the Board, contact Maria Woldt, Executive Director at execdir@wiscustomoperators.org or (608) 577-4345.



Joe and Mike Manthe of D&J Manthe Forage Services examining first crop at R&G Miller & Sons Dairy in Columbus, Wis.

WCO Member survey

By Maria Woldt, Executive Director

Nearly 15 years ago, the group of custom farmers who formed WCO wanted to provide members with data tools to be more competitive business owners and professionals. From the beginning, they wanted to develop tools to help members improve the quality of services they provided to farmers, raise standards in the custom farming industry and help farmers understand the quality and consistency of services they could expect from custom operators in Wisconsin. Fast forward to today, and WCO is poised to make this goal a reality.

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts a bi-annual survey that WCO has used as a reference for members and farmers. This survey, while valuable, lacks data customized to WCO members and your businesses. Further data

collection and tailored questions are needed.

WCO is in the process of developing an in-house custom rate survey and we need your help. A committee of WCO members, staff, stakeholders and WCO legal counsel will collaborate to create survey questions and data collection methods that meet member needs. Our goal is to conduct the survey this fall and present results in January at the annual Forage Symposium event in Wisconsin Dells.

The goal of the survey is to help WCO members improve best practices in the custom farming industry, and improve the quality and consistency of the services provided to clients. Questions will likely center on safety, handling client concerns, employee management/motivation practices, and financial ratios etc.

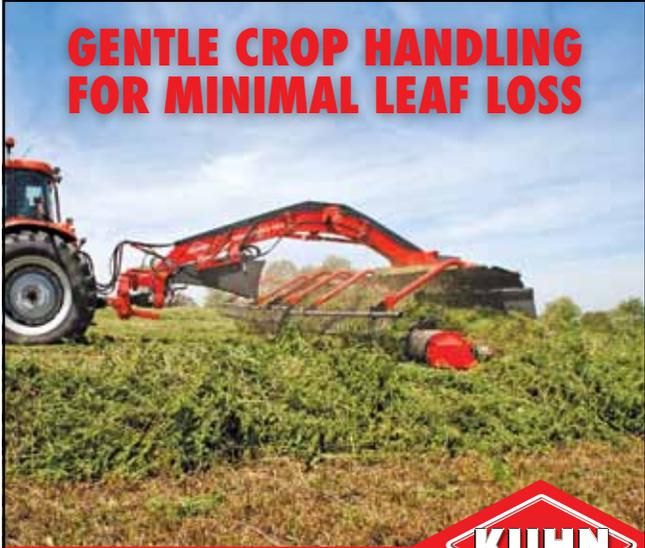
We are looking for a few volunteers to help determine questions that will be included in the survey. The time commitment will consist of one in-person meeting in late July/ Early August and possibly a few conference calls. Your input matters - please consider participating in this effort. If you are unable to serve on the committee, consider submitting questions for inclusion in the survey. This is a great chance together data which will help you improve the quality and consistency of the services you provide to your farmers! !

If you are interested in serving on the committee and or have ideas for questions, please contact Maria Woldt, WCO executive director at execdir@wiscustomoperators.org



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Making the pitch: How to ask your agent for insurance discounts

By Maria Woldt, WCO Executive Director

Running a safer business is the primary reason WCO members should participate in the Safety Certification Program. As an added benefit for your commitment to safety, there are also possible insurance benefits.

The WCO Safety Certification Program is what's classified in the insurance industry as a "loss-prevention program". Studies show over and over again that individuals who participate in loss-prevention programs or similar activities have lower incident rates. Fewer incidents mean fewer claims. Fewer claims mean....you get the picture!

Individuals or businesses that are perceived to be a lower risk to an insurance company pay lower rates. At this time, Chubb Insurance via Vincent, Urban, Walker & Associates is the only company that has publicly signed on to offer discounts to WCO members who embrace the Safety Certification Program.

What if you are a customer of another company? Can you still get a discount?

According to Dave Anderson, President & CEO of Vincent, Urban, Walker & Associates, clients can and should present the Safety Certification Program materials to their current insurance agent.

"You are doing more than the average person to keep your business safe," says Anderson. "You need to position yourself to your agent as someone who is going the extra mile."

Anderson recommends using handouts from the program (found on the memory stick mailed to you) as evidence when you meet with your agent.

"When I have a client who is looking to justify a lower rate via their loss prevention activities, I need tangible materials because I take them to the

1. Emphasize that you run a professional business. Improving safety, following the law and being a steward of the environment is part of your business model.
2. Use the handouts and memory stick with electronic copies of materials when meeting with your insurance agent
3. Mention that another company is willing to offer discounts.



Sergeant Michael Klingenberg from the WI DOT and Cheryl Skjolaas from UW-Madison spoke to the group about safety on the road at the first annual WCO Safety Certification Program event this past March.

different companies I work with," says Anderson.

It's also helpful to let your agent know that there is at least one company willing to offer discounts. Sometimes a little competition for discounts helps clients make a case.

When talking with your agent, Anderson encourages a professional emphasis. "Present yourself as a professional service," he says, "This is your career, not something you do on the weekend."

The WCO Safety Certification Program is voluntary, however, WCO worked to model our program after the Professional Nutrient Applicators

Association of Wisconsin's (PNAAW) mandated program.

"It took about four years, but incident rates are now about 80-95% lower with PNAAW members than when we started," says Anderson. "They invested in the program and it has really paid off."

For more information about the WCO Safety Certification Program, go to www.wiscustomoperators.org. If you attended the training and need additional materials (or another memory stick), email execdir@wiscustomoperators.org or call (608) 577-4345.

Sign Up New WCO Members and Save!

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member and they list your name on the paper application or online, you receive \$25 towards your 2016 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2016 sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. We already have members and sponsors taking advantage of the program. Help WCO grow our membership!

Welcome to WCO

General Members (\$50/year) derive their income (whole or part) from custom farming. Receive full voting rights and featured on website with business information.

Associate Members (\$50/year) support the custom farming industry, but do not engage in custom farming themselves.

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IoH and you: testimonials from the 2015 season

“What the IOH” is going on out there?

Bill Arneson
Arneson Custom Harvesting
Barneveld, Wis.

The past year has been an education in the legal process as it pertains to the agricultural industry. Leading up to 2015 there has been a great deal of work done by many in our industry to best meet the needs of the state, local municipalities and townships all while protecting the agricultural industry as a whole and specifically how it relates to custom farming. Sitting through information meetings last summer, fall and winter I really tried to get a grasp of what was going to happen in 2015.

I listened to many people at these meetings slay the messenger, instead of actually listening to see what the law truly held for them. The more I listened the more concerned I got about meeting the new standards.

The reality, for my operation, is that I basically have one machine that will

require permitting due to weight. I have one IOH vehicle that is a non-required but voluntary permit. I look back at the past year and remember thinking we would be hauling half loads to the farm in order to meet the road limits and that I would need 24 permits from a variety of municipalities just to go harvest for one of my customers.

The situation is much different for many of you as your equipment does require clearance to be operated on the roadways. I have discovered that many municipalities are on the state list for requiring IOH permitting but have no interest in putting people in place to complete the process. The concern I have with this is if you are in one of those townships and something goes wrong with the roads or heaven forbid you are involved in an accident and you did not get the permit, more than likely, the permit will then become an issue.

I have told a few people to get something from that municipality,

either the permit or a form letter stating they are not issuing permits. When in doubt ask questions. Don't believe you are right if you aren't sure you are right. I know one thing for sure about the new laws, the purpose was to clarify and protect, I am not sure that those goals have been met but we at least have a beginning.

Easy permits, not so easy answers

Ray Liska
Apollo Valle Enterprise
Cochrane, Wis.

Custom farming can be a tricky business. Many people don't understand what it takes to harvest hundreds of acres at several different farms over a large area. Our need to move equipment and products efficiently is vital to the success of our business, and our clients business.

Because of the size and weight of our packing tractors, and our need to move them over a large area, we applied for overweight permits. Using



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the no-fee permit application process was a relatively simple. Finding the application and submitting it to all of the necessary townships, counties and state took only a short time and minimal effort.

Shortly after we submitted our application we were quickly denied by the state. This affected our business negatively because all of our routes required travel on a state highway. Following the denial of our request, we inquired as to what maximum axle weight would be permitted. However we did not get the answers we needed and were instructed to re-apply for the permit. Since we are not able to get an approved permit, we have resorted to costly methods of de-weighting and removing equipment from the tractors to reduce their axle weights.

The need for modern custom farming businesses in agriculture is unprecedented. Many of us spend sleepless nights worrying about things like weather, help and maintenance. However, regulation is a very large part of what we do. Through organizations like WCO we are able to network and come together to form a unified voice on what regulations can and will work for us.

Editor's Note: Do you have an IoH testimonial that you wish to share with WCO? Contact Maria at (608) 577-4345 or execdir@wiscustomoperators.org

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“ The need for modern custom farming businesses in agriculture is unprecedented. However, regulation is a very large part of what we do. Through organizations like WCO, we are able to network and come together to form a unified voice on what regulations can and will work for us. ”

-Ray Liska, WCO Member

Save the Date!
2016 Forage Symposium

January 25-27, 2016
Chula Vista Resort
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

- Network with fellow operators
- Develop business relationships
- Learn the latest industry innovations

Registration opens in December
www.wiscustomoperators.org

To complete your no fee IoH/Ag CMV permit applications
(Required as of January 1, 2015), go to
www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/ag

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to
<http://wiscustomoperators.org/resources>