

IFCA NEWS



ILLINOIS FERTILIZER & CHEMICAL ASSOCIATION

Our Mission Statement: *To assist and represent the crop production supply and service industry while promoting the sound stewardship and utilization of agricultural inputs.*

Fall 2007 Newsletter

IFCA Chairman's Report *by Doug McDevitt*

As I write this many of you are watching harvest progressing nicely and even wrapping up in your area. For many areas I am hearing that corn yields are better than expected especially considering what little rain fell in some places. I am certain that the hybrids of 10 or 15 years ago wouldn't have performed nearly as well given the same weather conditions. I am also hearing that many farms are experiencing record setting yields. Such yields also bring record setting nutrient removal. Speaking of record setting, nutrient prices also fall into this category. Despite this, it appears that producers will replace these nutrients. Very strong grain prices and high yields have certainly fueled confidence.

It is the responsibility of the retail dealer as well as the producer to be good stewards by making sure these nutrients are applied properly and at agronomic rates. Stewardship is key as we are facing the possibility of being regulated on fall fertilization. We all know that it would be practically impossible to move all fall fertilization into spring. The environmental groups pushing for such legislation to greatly reduce or eliminate fall fertilization really don't care about the potential hardships imposed by such legislation so we must do everything in our power to eliminate or reduce the "ammunition" for such groups by practicing good stewardship.

While on the subject of stewardship, it appears that the application of fungicide on corn this year paid off well in most areas especially on hybrids more susceptible to disease. This will likely mean even more planes in the air next season. The Illinois Department of Agriculture will be monitoring aerial application very carefully next season. It will be imperative that retailers are working with reputable and legal aerial applicators. They must be licensed in Illinois and operate under the guidelines set forth by IDOA. There is still much concern about homeland security and the potential for terrorism so let's all do our part in being vigilant. I am sure you will hear more in the near future on this subject.

Have a successful fall season and keep safety and stewardship a priority.

IFCA Fall Nutrient Management Guidelines

On October 30th, Jean Payne will testify on behalf of our industry at a USEPA hearing in Cincinnati regarding the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Report. The latest—and near final—report from the Hypoxia Science Advisory Board contains several key findings and recommendations of serious concern to our industry. One recommendation in particular has our industry in the cross-hairs: It is:

- ◆ *To reduce spring loss from tile drained regions, alternative and more complex cropping systems (including perennials) are thought to be the most effective method of reducing losses. However, given current constraints in cropping systems, the Panel recommends reducing or discontinuing fall N application for corn, improved N fertilizer management techniques, use of cover crops, wetlands establishment and drainage management where appropriate.*

There is good and bad here, but the Science Advisory Board does recognize that management practices can be effective and supports incentives to promote technologies and practices that will reduce loss of N and P to water resources. While there is much debate over the science contained in the report, it is likely that fall N will remain a target. The final Hypoxia report is not a regulation or even policy at this point, but it is a document that will be discussed and waved in our face by the environmental activists for years to come. With that being said, IFCA is well positioned to defend our industry and the importance of fall fertilization. You can do your part to support our industry by promoting best management practices this fall when applying nitrogen. IFCA has posted a one page guide for nutrient management on our website. You can also view the daily 4-inch soil temperatures to use a guide for the proper timing of nitrogen. The agronomy handbook recommends that no ammonia be applied, even when stabilized, until the soil temperatures will remain below 60 degrees..50 degrees if no stabilizer is used.

Please be a steward and help IFCA defend our industry at the Hypoxia hearings by adhering to best management practices.

IFCA Officers & Staff

2007 Executive Committee

Chairman

Doug McDevitt, Effingham Equity, Effingham

Vice Chairman

Mark Tarter, Tarter Feed & Fertilizer, Canton

Finance Officer

Dan Zinck, Monsanto, Canton

Secretary

Terry Habrock, Terayne Ag Specialties, Venedy

Exec Committee Member

Rodney Phelps, Munson Hybrids, Galesburg

Past Chairman

Robin Schroeder, Wagner Seed & Supply, Jerseyville

2007 Directors

Martin Case, Agrotain, Bloomington

Ervin Caselton, Evergreen FS, Bloomington

Mike Corbin, New Ag Center, Monee

Bill Romshek, Heritage FS, Gilman

Dennis Ross, Seward Ag Supply, Seward

Gary Ruff, Precision Tank & Equipment, Decatur

Scott Shertz, Schertz Aerial, Hudson

Mark Stivers, Helena Chemical, Maroa

Brian Waddell, Mosaic, Normal

IFCA Staff

Jean Payne, President

jeanp@ifca.com

Leslie Forrest
Office and Membership Programs Coordinator

leslief@ifca.com

Kevin Runkle, Manager Regulatory Services

kevinr@ifca.com

1201 E. Bell Street
PO. Box 1326
Bloomington, IL 61702-1326
Ph (309) 827-2774
Fax (309) 827-2779

Visit us on the web at: www.ifca.com



Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association
Supply • Service • Stewardship

IFCA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

David Hagert, Agri-Data, Inc., Grand Forks, ND
Larry Hostetter, CHS Inc., Murphy, TX
Brian Quam, Peterson Motors Company, Watertown, SD
Tom Light, Walker Ag Equipment, Lisbon, IA
Robert Ryan Jr., RYCO Products, Bushnell, IL

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

Ag Retailers Association Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, December 5-7
Fluid Fertilizer Technology Roundup, St. Louis, Dec. 10-12
Illinois CCA Conference, Crown Plaza Springfield, December 20
Illinois Crop Technology Conference, U of I, Jan 9-10, 2008
IFCA Winter Convention, Peoria, IL January 21-23, 2008
CCA Exam, Pere Marquette, Peoria, February 1, 2008
National Agronomic Health & Safety School, Aug 19-20, 2008
MAGIE 2008, Interstate Center, Bloomington, Aug 20-21, 2008

2007 Mini-Bulk Recycling Update

Two mini-bulk collections occurred this year; Effingham-Clay Service Company in Effingham, IL on September 12 and at the Agrilience Distribution Center located near Curran, IL on Sept 26. A total of 190 mini-bulk containers were collected from both sites combined. The mini-bulk recycling program is sponsored by IFCA, the Council on Best Management Practices, GROWMARK and the Illinois Department of Agriculture. If you are interested in hosting a future mini-bulk program at your company, please contact Kevin.



IFCA & Extension Make Changes in Fertilizer/Seed Clinics

There will not be any regional fertilizer/seed clinics this fall; after studying the attendance trends at the fall clinics and receiving feedback from our members on the value of these courses, IFCA is embarking on a new plan to provide a more thorough and effective way to bring timely nutrient, chemical and seed educational sessions to you in a forum that saves you time and money. U of I Extension and IFCA are working together on a full day program on January 21, 2008 during the IFCA convention that will offer more in-depth presentations on crop production topics. The class will be in the new wing of the Peoria Civic Center, replacing the standard "FREC reports" at the Holiday Inn. FREC projects that are ready for presentation will be part of the program, but the session will also feature various topics on all CEU subject areas with more varied speakers. The program will be affordable and when the day is done you can attend the IFCA reception that kicks off the convention and trade show. We realize this is a change from tradition but we've been listening to you and hope this change will provide more value and less time away from your business to get your CEUs.



GOVERNMENT UPDATE

by Jean Payne



IFCA Partners with Illinois Attorney General on Ammonia Safety

At the 2007 Illinois State Fair, IFCA worked with Attorney General Lisa Madigan's Office on an ammonia nurse tank display that highlighted the success of the Ammonia Security Grant Program. Martin Green, Executive Assistant to Lisa Madigan, spent a day with the IFCA staff getting pictures and information on nurse tank locking devices and security systems utilized by the ammonia dealers to help protect anhydrous ammonia from theft and subsequent use to make methamphetamine. Pictured here is Marty getting a photo of a nurse tank valve lock, one of several devices that IFCA members were able to purchase with a 67% cost share from the State of Illinois...the result of legislation passed in 2005 by the IFCA and strongly supported by the Attorney General and the IL Department of Agriculture. This effort is an example of the positive working relationship that IFCA maintains with our state agencies as we work cooperatively with them on issues that impact our industry. Our special thanks to Brandt Consolidated who donated one of their nurse tanks for the State Fair display and to Myers Inc. who welcomed us to their facility in Towanda for the photo shoot.

More Fiscal Woes for Illinois

Our state legislature has been attempting to pass a budget since March of 2007. As I write this the legislature remains in session with plenty of discord on all sides. It won't be getting better any time soon; our state is dealing with billions in debt and the outlook for recovery isn't too good. The Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability recently released a report that projects rising unemployment, a national economic slowdown, falling corporate profits and plunging new home sales for Illinois. At 5.4%, unemployment in Illinois is a full 1% higher than the national average and unemployment here grew at a faster rate than any other state in the past year. Employment is completely flat, growing at 0%. Sales tax revenues are not growing as expected and corporate profits, according to the report, are expected to virtually disappear. This is not good news particularly since the people in Springfield who crafted this year's controversial budget based the state's spending plans on projections that the economy would be fairly robust in terms of tax revenues generated by what was expected to be a growing state economy. We expect more focus on "corporate loopholes" and perhaps some kind of proposal for a "minimum tax" on businesses during the 2008 legislative session.



Agribusiness Security Tax Credit

The Ag Retailers Association in Washington, D.C. reports that their efforts to secure a tax credit for agribusiness for costs related to security has been successfully incorporated into the Senate version of the 2007 Farm Bill. This proposal would allow an ag retailer or distributor to obtain a business tax credit for 30% of the costs for security measures such as installation of security cameras, equipment, employee background checks and computer safeguards. The effort will now be to work to retain the language in the final farm bill, which the House and Senate must still negotiate.

Clean Up Standards for Fertilizer Contamination Coming Soon

IFCA would like to take this moment to commend the Illinois Department of Agriculture for its leadership in working with industry to establish reasonable cleanup objectives for the remediation of nitrate and ammonium contaminated soil at ag retail facilities. Very soon new regulations will be proposed that amend the Agrichemical Facility Response Action Program (AFRAP) to incorporate cleanup objectives for nitrates and ammonium in soil as well in groundwater. The AFRAP program has for years had standards for remediation of pesticide contaminated soils, but fertilizer contamination issues had to be sent to IEPA for oversight. These new rules pave the way for our members to work with the Dept of Ag on remediation issues and further the scope and success of the land application program. Special thanks to Warren Goetsch and his staff at the IDA and Dr. William Roy of the Illinois State Geological Survey. These gentlemen have been working consistently on this rule for several years and have been successful in gaining IEPA's approval of the standards as well as their endorsement of IDA's handling the cleanup program. Several IFCA members also volunteered their sites for the soil studies to make this research possible. By the end of 2007 we are hopeful that the final rule will be in place, meaning our members will have a reasonable, environmentally responsible and cost-effective option for successfully dealing with agrichemical incidents requiring remediation.



INDUSTRY ISSUES



AERIAL APPLICATION AND PESTICIDE MISUSE COMPLAINT UPDATE

As aerial applicators filled the skies throughout Illinois this past summer, there were also a significant amount of plane crashes related to pesticide application. The IL Department of Ag (IDA) reports that eight aerial applicators crashed in Illinois resulting in one pilot fatality. To date there have been 113 pesticide misuse complaints involving ground and aerial application. 34 of those complaints were from an incident in Decatur, IL and is non-ag related, meaning there were 79 agriculture and lawn care related cases so far this year. To further break down the numbers, 43 cases have been closed with no misuse, 17 warning letters have been issued, and 6 cases have been referred to administrative hearings for monetary penalties. IFCA along with IDA anticipates another influx of out of state aerial applicators next year. Jerry Kirbach from the Illinois Department of Agriculture will explain the IDA's new regulatory policy for out of state aerial applicators during the IFCA Convention in January 2008 at the Peoria Convention Center. If you are involved in providing aerial services for your customers, you need to attend to learn about containment and licensing requirements and enforcement for 2008.



IFCA AND ASMARK PARTNERSHIP A SUCCESSFUL COMBINATION

For two years now IFCA has partnered with the Asmark Institute in Owensboro, KY to offer members some peace of mind when it comes to the complexity and time spent on regulatory compliance. Thirty IFCA members have signed up with the Asmark Institute since the project began, joining an additional 40 IFCA members who have been Asmark clients prior to the Institute being formed. Ag retailers are increasingly coming under more regulatory oversight, the most recent being the Department of Homeland Security with Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS). Allen Summers, co-founder of the Asmark Institute states, "Our industry can expect more challenges in the next few years. Budget shortfalls within the agencies and states, change in political environment and the overall increase in government regulation will require even more attention to compliance issues to avoid violations and penalties." If you are interested in what services Asmark offers, please contact Kevin.

IFCA DEVELOPING GUIDANCE FOR AGRICHEMICAL FACILITY FIRES

Did you know that in the past year, there have been five fires involving agrichemicals in Illinois? Three were at commercial facilities and two at farmer-owned sheds housing packaged and minibulk agrichemicals. There has always been some uncertainty as to the correct action to take in the event of an agrichemical facility fire. For example, is it better to let the facility burn or put the fire out to avoid air pollution? In response to this serious question, IFCA is developing an on-line tool specifically designed to help our members prepare for a fire and provide direction on the decision making process regarding the use of water. It will also help you better coordinate and communicate with your local fire departments so that the response activities don't make the situation even worse. We are working with Asmark and state regulatory agencies on this project and hope to make it available in early 2008.

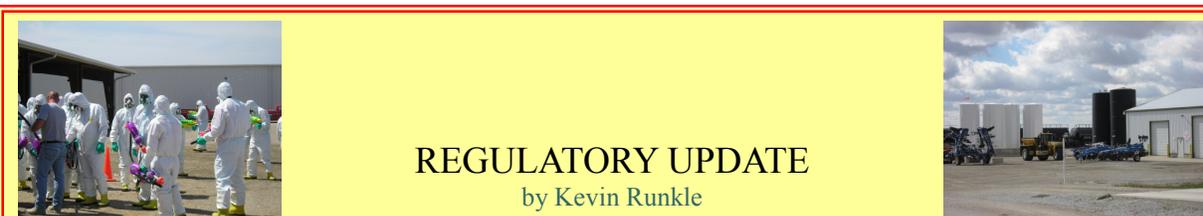


NURSE TANK INSPECTION PROGRAM UPDATE

The nurse tank in this picture failed a pressure test in March 2007. This tank was undergoing a hydrostatic pressure test of 375 psi. The red arrow indicates a 1/8" crack running down the center of the tank. The hydrostatic pressure test is one of three inspections that tanks which are missing their data plates must pass in order to be eligible for the special permit DOT SP-13554. To date, there have been 5,613 NH3 nurse tanks tested in Illinois. Of those tanks, 18 have failed the hydrostatic pressure test, 73 failed the thickness test and 111 have failed the visual inspection. Combined, this results in a 3.5% failure rate. It may seem like we keep harping on this subject, but the NTIP program is federal regulation and failure to test your nurse tanks with missing data plates can result in serious penalties and civil liability if a tank fails and someone is injured.

Call Kevin at the IFCA office for assistance.





myRMP ENDORSED BY USEPA

The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) has announced in a press release that USEPA Headquarters is endorsing the web-based *myRMP* program as a way for ag retailers to achieve compliance with the RMP regulations. The press release is posted on the IFCA home page at www.ifca.com. This on-line program was developed cooperatively by the Asmark Institute, TFI and other industry leaders. IFCA has been seeking uniform enforcement of the RMP regulation from the various EPA Regions ever since the RMP audits began in Illinois in 2005. In June of 2006, IFCA President Jean Payne testified before the US Senate Environment Committee regarding the lack of uniform enforcement and differing requirements to gain compliance with the RMP. This decision by USEPA is therefore a very positive sign that they are now willing to work more cooperatively with the industry on this (and hopefully other) issues. Special thanks to TFI and to the Asmark Institute for providing the resources to develop this program for the industry and for working with USEPA headquarters to gain their official support. The *myRMP* tool consists of RMP guidance for retail ag facilities, personalized written operating procedures, equipment maintenance manual, hazard review form, compliance audit form and an incident investigation form, all of which were cited by Region V USEPA as common violations of the RMP regulation. The program was launched on August 13, 2007 and is available for use by ag retailers nationwide at no charge to the user. The next five year update for the RMP is June 2009, and IFCA is encouraging all ag retailers to use the *myRMP* program to help achieve compliance with the regulation. With USEPA's endorsement of the program, you can take a major step in ensuring compliance by utilizing this nationally recognized program. To access the *myRMP* program, go to <http://www.tfi.org> and click on *myRMP*. The program is funded by a USEPA grant awarded to the Asmark Institute. If you have any questions about the *myRMP* program, please contact Jean or Kevin at the IFCA office.

IMPORTANT AMMONIA NURSE TANK ISSUES—MAXIMUM FILL AND R STAMP WELDS

The IL Dept of Ag has made IFCA aware of numerous incidents involving the overfilling of anhydrous ammonia storage and nurse tanks around the state. IFCA has been informed that a zero tolerance policy may go into effect next year. This means tanks filled beyond 85% capacity will be taken out of service until the problem is fixed. The IDA inspectors will be checking ammonia facilities to make sure compliance with the 85% rule is followed. If IDA finds tanks filled beyond 85% capacity, facilities will be asked to immediately reduce the tanks to the acceptable and safe capacity. The last thing anyone wants is to evacuate a nearby town because an anhydrous ammonia storage or nurse tank relieves built up pressure due to over filling and fails to shut off.

Only R Stamp Welds are Acceptable

This summer, the issue of welding on NH₃ nurse tanks was a highly discussed topic between the IFCA and the USDOT Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. USDOT personnel made it very clear that welding on nurse tanks can only be done by an "R" or "U" stamp rated welding facility. The Illinois Department of Agriculture has revised their list of certified welders to include welders with an "R" stamp rating on their website. IFCA has posted a list of "R" stamp welders on our website with experience welding on nurse tanks. If you have any questions about proper certification of welders, you can always contact the IFCA office for clarification of a welder's credentials. Penalties for violating this federal hazardous material regulations can result in fines as much as \$10,000 per day per violation. If a tank is missing a data plate and is usable, it can be enrolled in the Nurse Tank Inspection Program to test the integrity of the nurse tank.

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION REQUIRES VEHICLE REGISTRATION

The Illinois Commerce Commission is administering the new Unified Carrier Registration Program (UCR) which requires individuals and companies operating commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce to register their business under the UCR program and pay an annual fee based on the size of their fleet. This new program replaces the old Bingo Card & Bingo Stamp program. If you or your company drops off or picks up any product, including grain and fertilizer, at a river barge terminal, rail terminal or air freight terminal, then the ICC considers that to be one leg of interstate commerce. Also, traveling from Illinois to another state constitutes interstate commerce. Although you must register all vehicles in your company fleet, the fee only applies to vehicles used in interstate commerce. The ICC also states, "farmers are not exempt from this regulation." Fleet registration was due by October 15, 2007. If you have any questions about the application process or are not sure if your company fits the definition of an interstate carrier, please contact Jean Payne or Kevin Runkle at the IFCA office.

MAGIE 2007 HIGHLIGHTS

2007 MAGIE ATTENDANCE			
State	Atten- dance	State	Atten- dance
Canada	7	MI	11
S. America	4	MN	36
AL	3	MO	35
AR	7	MS	5
AZ	1	MT	1
CA	7	NC	5
CO	3	ND	2
CT	3	NE	16
DC	6	NY	6
DE	1	OH	17
FL	2	OK	4
GA	6	PA	15
IA	122	SC	1
IL	1503	SD	6
IN	124	TN	13
KS	22	TX	5
KY	24	VA	4
LA	1	WA	1
MD	5	WI	48



MAGIE 2007 was back in Bloomington, IL this year with a crowd of over 2,000 people. Despite temperatures in the 90s (hey at least no downpours!) a wonderful crowd from around the country came to learn and see first hand the latest technology in the crop input sector. This year, a dual ride-and-drive area was a hit with both exhibitors and attendees. After a full day at the exhibits and test driving the equipment everyone was invited to the MAGIE Tailgate Party. Beverages and snacks were provided along with an opportunity to ride the mechanical bull. Just like at last year's hospitality party, attendees had the opportunity to win cash and prizes. The happy winners are listed below.

MAGIE 2008 will be held on August 20-21, 2008 at the Interstate Center in Bloomington IL. We'd like to thank our MAGIE exhibitors and members for making this year's show a success and for responding to surveys to help us choose a location for next year that provides the best overall benefits for everyone involved in the show.

Tailgate Party Winners!

- Ryan Damerell - Evergreen FS \$250 CASH
- Ron Martin - Willard Agri-Service \$250 CASH
- Alex Hamilton - Tri-Ag \$250 Bass Pro Shop Certif.
- Charlie Bossingham - LeRoy Fert. \$250 Bass Pro Shop Certif.
- Shannon Sis - Stuart Fertilizer LCD Television
- Jarrood Burall - Willard Agri-Service I-POD
- Julius Kuberski - Ag-Tech Digital Picture Frame
- Frank Lopez - Earlybird Feed Wireless Weather Station

Two people won \$100 just for riding the mechanical bull.

Frank Lopez - Earlybird Feed & Chris McGlasson - Tri-Ag



Kenda VanWieringen with Watseka Interstate LLC rides the mechanical bull.



IFCA members enjoy ice cold refreshments at the MAGIE tailgate party after a hot and busy day at the show.



**Illinois Fertilizer &
Chemical Association**
Supply • Service • Stewardship

**ILLINOIS FERTILIZER
&
CHEMICAL ASSOCIATION**

**SCHOLARSHIP
APPLICATION**

RETURN BY DECEMBER 14, 2007 TO:

**IFCA
P.O. Box 1326
BLOOMINGTON, IL 61702-1326
PH (309) 827-2774
WWW.IFCA.COM**

IFCA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

STUDENT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ EMAIL: _____

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY ATTENDING: _____ CURRENT GPA _____

ACADEMIC MAJOR/MINOR: _____ EXPECTED DATE OF GRADUATION: _____

TOTAL COLLEGE CREDIT HOURS FOR YOUR CURRICULUM AS OF END OF LAST COMPLETED SEMESTER: _____

PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGE EXPENSES PROVIDED BY:

PARENTS _____ LOAN _____ OFF OR ON CAMPUS JOB _____

MERIT SCHOLARSHIP _____ SUMMER JOBS _____ OTHER _____

NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIP _____ SAVINGS _____

HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDED: _____ HIGH SCHOOL GPA _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND HOME ADDRESS: _____

HOW DO YOU ENVISION USING YOUR DEGREE AFTER COMPLETING YOUR EDUCATION? _____

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS AND PURPOSE IN PURSUING A CAREER IN AGRICULTURE? _____

LIST CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES OR OTHER ACTIVITIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES YOU HAVE HAD: _____

LIST YOUR EMPLOYMENT HISTORY AND GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR DUTIES IN EACH JOB HELD. _____

(USE A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER IF NECESSARY FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION)



ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

CORRELATION vs. CAUSATION: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

By Kevin Runkle

Our industry is constantly facing scrutiny from environmental groups as well as other organizations adamantly opposed to the nature of our industry. Almost everyday there is a sensationally skewed journal article written about the negative effects of pesticides and fertilizers. One of the answers suggested by the media always seems to be “grow and buy organic.” As we look at this challenging issue, what does the topic of correlation and causation have to do with our industry? All too often scientists are ready to find the cause of something. For example, pesticides cause health problems, excessive nitrogen or phosphorous rates cause the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Zone to expand at alarming rates or fertilizer and pesticide runoff is the cause of deformities in aquatic life. And then we have one of the most highly debated subjects of the last century, the burning of fossil fuels and the use of fertilizer causes global warming.

Well planned and sound scientific research rarely uses the term “cause” because it is too powerful a word and most times it is very difficult to prove A causes B. Therefore, we have the back up term “correlation.” My thesis advisor always used the example of “*more ice cream sold causes a higher rate of crime.*” Ice cream, crime rates—what does this have to do with the fertilizer industry? Anyone who believes increased ice cream sales causes more crime may come off as a little eccentric. But, if we change the term from causation to correlation it might be applicable to say there is an indirect correlation between the amount of ice cream sold and increased crime rates meaning there is more to the picture than just ice cream and crime. For example, more ice cream is probably sold during the warmer summer months. During summer, there are more people out and about resulting in more interaction and a greater likelihood someone may become the victim of a crime. Therefore, we can summarize that increased ice cream sales do not cause crime rates to increase, but rather there are a myriad of other factors which impact crime rates within a society. Therefore it is not an accurate statement to say increased ice cream sales cause increased crime rates, but for the media, this would be an eye catching article to help increase newspaper sales.

We can apply this same thought process to research claims that, “increased corn acres cause an increase in the gulf hypoxia zone.” Increased corn acres will demand more nutrients, but does increased fertilizer use actually cause the hypoxia zone to expand? Therefore, there is more likely an indirect correlation between fertilizer use and expansion of the gulf hypoxia zone, but once again such a statement attracts attention to help sell newspapers. What about the legions of untrained citizens in communities living near water sources that don't maintain their septic systems, who like to grow lush green lawns, or all the golf courses in the country that demand fertilizer and pesticides to keep the greens, well, nice and green? Very rarely do we see a newspaper article blaming golf courses or the numerous suburban do it yourselfers with a fertilizer spreader blamed for water contamination. Most often, we see newspaper articles blaming the ag industry for such atrocities.

With regard to organic farming, this is something relatively new in the eyes of the media and therefore seems to be the “end all troubles” answer to the problems caused by the media's perception of fertilizer and pesticides. If you remember about a year ago there was a problem with spinach from an organic farm in California. Literally tons of spinach were recalled leaving salad lovers across the nation with a void not too easily filled and hundreds of innocent spinach growers bankrupt. Which term do we use in this situation? Were organic farming practices the cause of the contaminated spinach? Five people died in the E. coli outbreak due to contaminated spinach and dozens more were taken to nearby hospitals.

One year after this deadly outbreak, USA Today printed a three page article about the outbreak and attempts by the Food and Drug Administration to pinpoint the source of the contaminated spinach. Eventually the source was traced back to an organic farm in central California. The USA Today article was very in depth in discussing the families affected by this tragedy and general concern about food safety, but one of the most important items missing from the story was a more in depth look at how the spinach became contaminated in the first place. Very little was mentioned about organic farming practices or possible dangers of organic production. In fact, the only time the word “organic” was mentioned was when the author of the article used the name of the farm where the contamination occurred, “Mission Organics.” Would the USA Today journalists been so kind to our industry had the contamination been linked to traditional crop production practices? Recent studies have shown organic produce has a 10% chance of containing the E. coli virus compared to a 1.6% chance from food sources using conventional farming practices. It is a bold step to state organic farming practices caused the E. coli outbreak so I think it is best to make the statement that there is a direct correlation between organic farming practices and the E. coli outbreak in the spinach.

One causation claim that is safe to say is that the media's inaccurate and sensationalistic method of story reporting encourages the general public's ignorance about the important use of fertilizer and pesticides, thus perpetuating the false ideology that organic farming is a safer alternative than current farming practices.

This column dedicated to Dave Flakne of Syngenta Crop Protection, one of our industry's most passionate advocates.



Thoughts From the President's Desk by *Jean Payne*

Once a year, the leaders of state agribusiness associations from across the United States get together to brainstorm on how to better serve our members and make our Associations more effective. This summer we met in Texas and we had a full day session on the “*7 Measures of Success: What Remarkable Associations Do that Others Don't.*” There may be seven things, but what it really comes down to is one absolutely vital thing, according to the author of the book: Identify your mission, state it clearly and make sure everything you do relates to your mission statement. An Association's mission statement should be one sentence, uttered in one breath. If you can't remember it and can't recite it, you already face your first obstacle to success. IFCA's mission, defined by our Board of Directors and carried out by our staff is this:

To assist and represent the crop production supply and service industry while promoting the sound stewardship and utilization of agricultural inputs.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you see our mission statement coming through clearly in each topic. We work to assist and represent you and we hammer home the importance of stewardship because we know that if we don't police ourselves, we will be policed by those who don't understand or appreciate our industry. Kevin, Leslie and I all feel a deep sense of responsibility and pride in working for this Association...in working for you. We know our members and we know our mission. But there are times when we receive suggestions and encouragement to get involved in things that aren't necessarily tied to our mission statement. Many people reach out to IFCA because they know we can influence issues and can often accomplish large tasks in an efficient manner. It isn't always easy to say no, but we have declined these overtures, many of them offered with good intentions, because they just don't fit with our mission statement. IFCA doesn't sell insurance, we don't print calendars, we don't campaign for public officials...but we have often been asked to do all of these things and more. If you look at some examples of Associations that have come and gone in all walks of life, it is often because they didn't have a clear mission, they tried to be everything to everybody or they forgot that they existed to serve their members—until all of a sudden their members weren't there anymore. I want to thank you, our member, and all the past and present Board members for defining so clearly what you want and expect from your Association and for providing the feedback that we consistently need to measure our success. Keep it simple, keep it clear. And one more thing: Smile and count your blessings every day—what a great industry we have.

IFCA
P.O. Box 1326
Bloomington, IL 61702-1326