

News Release

NOTE to NEWS EDITORS: Photos and audio clips are available in the Newsroom of www.SafeElectricity.org. The full length video is also streamed on the website. Any media requesting broadcast quality PSAs or high resolution print PSAs can email: Info@SafeElectricity.org or call 217-546-6815.

(Note to broadcasters: Flach is pronounced as “flock”)

Contact: 217-546-6815

Tragic Farm Accident Underscores Large Equipment, Power Line Dangers

2011” Teach Learn Care TLC” Electrical Safety Campaign Launched

(WARRENSBURG, Ill.)— “He would help any kid in the barn,” says Brett Flach about his father, long time 4-H Club leader and champion livestock showman, who was willing to teach anyone his tricks of the trade in preparing animals for competitive judging. “He was a good man, and a lot of people loved him.”

Jim Flach taught thousands on the livestock show circuit and as a Central Illinois farmer, was willing to help anyone anytime. In fact, he was operating a crop sprayer in a neighbor’s field, when a sprayer arm contacted an overhead power line. Jim was severely injured when he climbed from the cab to the ground, and eventually died of his injuries.

Working with Safe Electricity’s “Teach Learn Care TLC” campaign, his family is extending his teaching legacy by sharing the story of their tragic loss in hopes of preventing accidents. The video of their story can be seen at www.SafeElectricity.org.

“You need to double check, triple check to see what is above you,” says his widow Marilyn. Son Brett adds, “Be conscious of your surroundings. You need to keep your eyes open and beware of overhead lines.”

There are more than 400 electrical fatalities every year among workers, and electrocutions on farms are the fourth highest of any job classification, according to the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH). Most of the electrical deaths investigated in a NIOSH survey could have been prevented.

Marilyn and her sons say the family was well aware of the dangers of the power lines that crossed near their farmstead, and that Jim had told his sons to beware of the hazards. Brian Flach said if his father had remained in the cab of the sprayer, “probably everything would have turned out differently.”

There were no witnesses to the accident, but when equipment contacts overhead power lines, the operator is almost always safest staying in the cab. When Jim stepped down from the sprayer, he became the path to ground for the deadly current.

The goal of this TLC campaign is two-fold: making farmers and other operators of large equipment aware of how to stay safe if contact is made with overhead power lines and even more so, the importance of avoiding contact altogether.

“(Jim) was surrounded by so much equipment in that cab it was difficult to see what was around him,” Marilyn says. That’s why Safe Electricity strongly urges the use of a spotter or someone with a broader view when working near utility lines.

Their son Brian says, “I lost my father to electricity and I talk about that with my wife and kids so they know the hazards of electricity.” That philosophy is at the heart of the TLC campaign, aimed at getting people to learn what they need to about electrical safety and share it with others.

“We commend the Flach family for their commitment to preventing other tragic accidents by sharing their story and the painful lessons learned” says Safe Electricity’s Molly Hall, program executive director. “We encourage everyone to visit www.SafeElectricity.org to see the video of Jim’s story and learn all of the vital information operators must know when working with large equipment around power lines.”

For more information on electrical safety and to see videos of other personal stories, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

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For more information and videos on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety and energy efficiency, and supported by a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting safe use of electricity.