

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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Safety stressed at training

ENID, Okla. – The 2015 Oklahoma Anhydrous Ammonia Safety Training Video Conference held Wednesday was a reminder of respect.

There are economic benefits to Oklahoma’s agricultural producers in using anhydrous ammonia for fertilizer, according to Lance Kunneman, Fertilizer Program Administrator for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF).

However, this combination of hydrogen and nitrogen must be handled with respect to prevent possibly serious injuries.

For more than a decade, ODAFF along with agricultural industry related partners has used the video conference approach to provide this annual reminder of respect through training.

“Anhydrous is the cheapest form of nitrogen, but if not handled correctly, it is a dangerous product,” Kunneman said. “But if everyone gets training and uses all the safety precautions, it is a safe product just as long as you respect it when you’re handling it.”

Kunneman, as well as fellow conference presenters Tay Rucker of the U.S. Department of Transportation and Gary Cless of Fairbank Equipment, gathered at Autry Technology Center in Enid for separate sessions Wednesday morning and afternoon. The video conference was live-streamed to participants at Autry Technology Center as well as Southwest Technology Center in Altus, Western Technology Center in Weatherford, Cameron University in Lawton, Panhandle State in Goodwell and Chisholm Trail Technology Center in Omega.

This year’s conference attracted about 200 attendees. The training helps companies meet the training requirements of their Risk Management Plans. The program was sponsored ODAFF, Triangle Insurance Co. and the Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association.

Kenny Naylor, director for ODAFF Consumer Protection Services said “We did this individually for a lot of companies. However, we realized we needed to be offering this to everyone. Instead of going to 10 locations with various companies, we’d go to one location and live-stream to others statewide.”

That was 2004.

At about the time Naylor began considering the statewide approach, there were two anhydrous ammonia accidents, one in the panhandle and the other in southern Oklahoma. In both cases, the individuals injured had to be taken to the hospital, he said.

“To the best of my knowledge, we’ve only had one reported injury accident since,” he said. “I think these conferences have had a significant impact by informing them and reminding them of safety precautions before they get started.”

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Photo caption: Lance Kunneman, Fertilizer Program Administrator for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry, was among the presenters Wednesday at the 2015 Oklahoma Anhydrous Ammonia Safety Training Video Conference.

