

Equipment WISE (Women Increasing Skills and Education)

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Goal Statement

The goal of Equipment WISE is to give female producers the opportunity to learn and gain confidence in operating equipment on farm safely.

Relevance

In Virginia, the number of women reporting as the principal operator on their farm has increased dramatically in the last five years. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reported:



	2012	2017	% Increase
Farms	7,653	16,456	215 %
Acres	780,688	2,043,877	261%
5 years = OVER 200% ↑ in Female Farmers			

During a post program survey of the 2021 Cattle WISE (Women Increasing Skills and Education) program, attendees stated there was a major need for equipment-specific programming. The 2018 data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the agricultural sector is still the most dangerous in America with 574 fatalities, including 19 fatalities in Virginia's agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting sectors. Accidents and injuries on the farm are primarily due to interactions with livestock or equipment.

Response

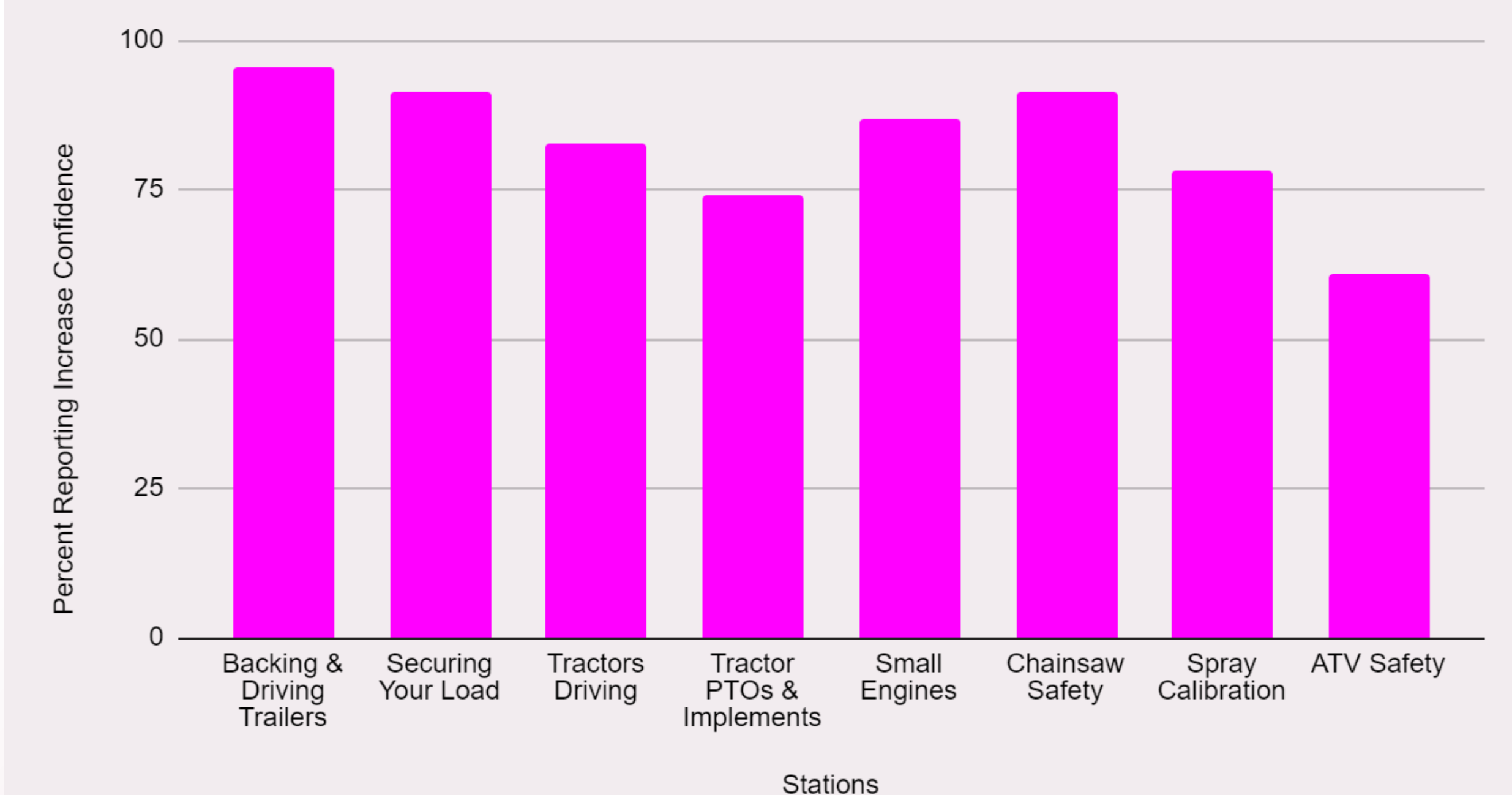
Equipment WISE is designed to focus on: tractor operation, maneuvering trailers, proper tie down of loads, ATV safety, sprayer calibrations, small engine troubleshooting and chainsaw operations. The planning team partnered with the Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs, the Virginia Tech Environmental Health and Farm Agriculture Safety Training Program, Virginia Department of Forestry, and the Virginia Tech Kentland Farm to provide hands-on instruction in the previously mentioned areas. Finally, the planning team sought out private industry partners to support the Equipment WISE program's financial needs.

Equipment WISE was held at the Virginia Tech Kentland Farm on October 21, 2022. There were 23 participants from 15 counties in Virginia and two participants from North Carolina. Instructors focused on giving women the opportunity to ask questions and opportunity to practice skills.

Results

At the conclusion of the Equipment WISE program, participants were surveyed about their experience. A focus for the program is to increase the confidence of participants in addition to gaining knowledge and skills.

Equipment WISE: Confidence Level Increase



Participant's Quotes



- One individual stated that she was "excited to show off to my dad!"
- "Love the small groups and hands on."
- "Excellent program! Thank you for putting this on for women!"

