



## *AgSafe - Embracing Challenge for a Safer Industry*

The year was 1991 and California Senate Bill 198 had recently been enacted. The legislation, passed in an effort to improve California's economic competitiveness, now required every employer to develop and implement a written injury and illness prevention plan. The law applied to all businesses, regardless of size or potential for hazard.

The impact on California's agricultural community was devastating. Small businesses, in particular, were not equipped with the resources or expertise needed to comply. As a result, companies found themselves in search of industry-generated assistance. An alliance of associations, businesses and safety professionals came together in late 1991 to offer the California Agricultural Safety Exposition.

The event, designed to provide a single source of safety resources, was a tremendous success. The positive feedback from all segments of California's agricultural industry led to the formation of a coalition known as AgSafe. This group of individuals, companies and trade organizations sought to continue educating the industry on the myriad of safety issues impacting agriculture.

In 1994, AgSafe held its first Annual Conference as its mechanism for broad-based safety training and education. Later that year the coalition transitioned into a membership-based organization in an effort to offer the agricultural industry more information and learning opportunities. It only seemed natural, then, to partner with an educational institution to grow and flourish.

The Center for Agricultural Business at California State University, Fresno offered AgSafe a new home in 1998. For a decade the two entities worked side-by-side to reach new segments of the industry with critical safety information. During that time, thousands across the state were trained in critical issue areas, AgSafe's membership flourished and the Annual Conference grew to be the preeminent safety education event in the industry.



Today, AgSafe embarks on the next leg of its journey. While its base is strong, there are still opportunities to broaden the membership across commodities and regions throughout the state. Organizational programs, now focused on health, safety and human resources, are being planned more often in more places, and plans are in place to explore new ways of educating the agricultural industry.

Going forward, AgSafe continues to be true to the founding ideals of those coalition members. The organization came to be founded during times of challenge. A need existed to ensure safety and compliance while maintaining economic viability. Through education, training and information dissemination, California's agricultural industry has been able to minimize injuries, illness and fatalities and with AgSafe at the forefront, will continue to do so long into the future.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**