



April 3, 2025

Dear RF-DASH Community,

Hopefully this email finds you well. Unfortunately, we are writing today with some difficult news about the future of the RF-DASH program.

As of April 1, 2025, the National Institute of Occupational and Safety (NIOSH) and Health and its Office of Agriculture Safety and Health were effectively dismantled. NIOSH is a part of the CDC, and NIOSH grants are what led to the development, refinement, and growth of the RF-DASH program over the last 8 years. Barring stopgap measures at the federal level, the primary source of funding for RF-DASH activities will cease to exist on October 1, 2025, or sooner. The funding provided to the RF-DASH program supported work with rural fire departments, emergency services providers, and the agricultural population. Our aim was to translate the funding we received into a benefit to rural firefighters and rural communities. To date, we think we have been quite good at achieving this aim.

We do not disagree that there are some government-funded projects that can be perceived as wasteful due to the little positive impact that they make on the world. However, RF-DASH is not among them. As documented in the last newsletter, the RF-DASH program has led to numerous trainings, outreach events, and connections between rural first responders. Hopefully you will agree that these impacts are positive.

The goal of the RF-DASH program is to equip rural first responders with agricultural health and safety knowledge to prevent farm injuries and improve emergency preparedness in rural communities. It does so by bringing together farmers, agricultural workers, emergency responders, and partner organizations to prevent injuries and save lives. Thus, the RF-DASH philosophy might be distilled to the following idea: Safer farms build safer communities. The goals and accomplishments of RF-DASH are part of what is at stake in the recent dissolution of the NIOSH Office of Agriculture Safety and Health.

We hope you can sense the urgency and importance of the message we are conveying. If you have stories or testimonials of how our work has impacted you or your community, please share with us as soon as possible. Also, if you would like to carry our message in your words to your representatives and senators, we would have heartfelt thanks. We are also happy to discuss these points with you and answer any questions.

Respectfully,

The RF-DASH Team

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