

Feeling safer changes everyday life



FOR YOU TO CONSIDER

By J.T. SMITH

ALL you have to do is watch the evening news — any channel — and you'll see drug advertisements for about any ailment you could imagine.

Maybe I could take some of those miracle compounds, dye my gray hair and mustache, and feel — and look — young again, or at least younger.

It's a billion-dollar industry.

Indeed, if you wear your seat belt, use air bags, eat your fruits and veg-

etables, avoid junk food, consume diet drinks, exercise (to offset sitting at a computer), and avoid 1,000 or so things "bad" for you, then chances are you might live a long, long time.

We are a nation that worships youth. We'll also gladly do about anything to feel safe.

Turning on the tube, I hear the weather forecaster claiming his super radar was faster than the other two local television stations in warning folks of severe weather.

When weather is hot, you should stay inside. Or if you don't have good air conditioning, just hang out inside the local mall.

If it gets too cold, just call in sick.

What's most striking is how easily people can be trained when they feel something will make them safer.

Airports are the ultimate

I personally try to make it easy on everyone else when I fly. I use a rubber band instead of a money clip. Since my wife drops me off at the airport, I leave my keys at home. I give her my pocket change. I never take any of my many hats. And I wear shoes with fiberglass shanks instead of steel shanks. They don't cause a beep going through security.

The sign in the airport tells you they "suggest" you remove your shoes.

Since my shoes don't cause a beep, some airports just let me continue. Some security folks don't. Then you have to stand in a little square while a guy comes with a wand to run along your shoes.

That happened to me just the other day because I exercised my option to walk through. My shoes didn't beep, but the lady seemed quite disappointed they didn't and ordered me to stand in a square to have my shoes get the wand anyway.

It's easier to just remove your shoes, I suppose, if you don't mind filth. (That is, walking in your sock feet where multitudes of other sock feet, which have been heaven knows where, have passed.)

I see people practically getting

naked! They hurriedly taking off things they don't even have to take off just to make the flight.

This security and safety craze also extends to doloing out pretzels instead of allergy-inducing peanuts.

And don't use the bathrooms by first class. You'll look suspicious.

And, for safety's sake, keep the seat belt around you most of the time.

Bottom line: You can feel the tense-ness when you fly nowadays.

I don't see people visiting much on flights anymore. They've got their head-phones on, tuning out the world.

I don't see as many smiles from pas-sengers or flight attendants.

But it's all part of being safe, I sup-pose.

How far do you want to go with agri-culture and food safety?

Premises and animal ID will be an enormous task. But in the end, they say the food supply will be safer. I suppose.

Modern machinery — farm tractors and implements — has assorted safety gadgets. No doubt, they're good (al-though expensive).

Space flight is a classic example.

Folks want to explore the entire uni-verse, but the spacecraft needs to be absolutely, positively safe.

But I bet astronauts get peanuts.

Help victims based on loss, not location

GUEST EDITORIAL

By PAM GOLDEN

DID you get a \$1,500 credit card from the Federal Emergency Management Agency after the last hurricane hit your community? How about another \$1,500 from the American Red Cross? If you didn't have home insurance, did you get a check for \$150,000?

Me neither. My community hasn't been hit by one hurricane in the past three years. It's been slammed by two and damaged by several more.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I listened to people holler and moan about the government not doing enough to help the victims. First, I cared. I've been there. Then, I was a bit disgusted with people who didn't even bring food and water to the shelter. That's been drilled into our heads since before I moved to Florida 30 years ago. When they complained about long lines to get their debit cards, I suggested everyone of working age on the monthly dole when the hurricane hit be dropped from the line. That would make it a lot shorter. That's about the time I turned absolutely indifferent to the squalling and gnashing. Now I'm ticked. Seriously ticked.

Where is it written that victims of a hurricane — or any other natural disaster — should be compensated to a greater extent than victims of another disaster? Why does an employee of a big company receive more help than a small-business owner? Where is it written that if you don't have insurance, the rest of us who paid insurance premiums now have to ante up tax money to compensate your loss?

The final straw came with this note from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in regard to the Emergency Conservation Program: "The ESP provides cost-share assistance up to 75%.

However, producers may receive up to 100% cost-share assistance for these activities for damages caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita only."

Excuse me?

The government response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita is the best argument in favor of a disaster provision in the 2007 Farm Bill. The issue is parity.

First, victims of a hurricane suffer at varying levels depending on the damage to their homes and their communities. Geographic location, however, lends no distinction. That means victims should be compensated based on their loss, not their ZIP code.

Further, if insurance is available and someone chooses not to purchase it, that's a risk he or she chooses to take.

However, if insurance isn't available or is inadequate, as is the situation with most agricultural enterprises, then we must step up to the plate to compensate victims. The way to do that is to prepare for such disasters with a written plan for responding, documenting and compensating those who were in the path of the hurricane, under the rays of the drought or twisted by the tornado.

Otherwise, our response is dictated by our emotions and tempered only by the size of the purse available in the wake of the disaster.

Fewer people were impacted by Hurricane Ivan than by Hurricane Katrina, but those who lost their houses, lost their homes; those who lost pine stands no longer have a retirement crop; those who watched their cotton bolls blanket the ground had nothing to take to the gin — regardless of whether they lived in Louisiana or lower Alabama.

A disaster provision ensures they're compensated equally. Write it now.

Golden is a Farm Progress editor.

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