



How dangerous is farm work?

Contrary to the popular image of fresh air and peaceful surroundings, a farm is not a hazard-free work setting. Every year, thousands of farm workers are injured and hundreds more die in farming accidents. According to the National Safety Council, agriculture is the most hazardous industry in the nation.

What are the health and safety hazards on farms?

Farm workers- including farm families and migrant workers are exposed to hazards such as the following;

- Chemicals/Pesticides
- Cold
- Dust
- Electricity
- Falls
- Grain Bins
- Hand Tools
- Highway Traffic
- Lifting
- Livestock Handling
- Machinery/Equipment
- Manure Pits
- Mud
- Noise
- Ponds
- Silos
- Slips/Trips
- Sun/Heat
- Toxic gases
- Tractors
- Wells

What factors are associated to injury and illness on the farm?

The following factors may increase risk for farm workers;

- Age- Injury rates are highest among children under 15 and adults over 65.
- Equipment and machinery- Most farm accidents and fatalities involve machinery.
- Proper maintenance- according to manufacturer's recommendations can help prevent accidents.
- Protective Equipment- Using protective equipment, such as seat belts on tractors, and personal protective equipment (such as safety gloves, coveralls, boots, hats, aprons, goggles, face shields) could significantly reduce farming injuries.

What can I do to improve safety on my farm?

You can start by increasing your awareness of farming hazards and making a conscious effort to prepare for emergency situations including fires, vehicle accidents, electrical shocks from equipment and wires, and chemical exposure. Be especially alert to hazards that may affect children and the elderly. Minimize hazards by carefully selecting products you buy to ensure that you provide good tools and equipment. Always use seat belts when operating tractors, and establish and maintain good housekeeping practices. Here are some other steps you can take to reduce illness and injuries on your farm;

- Read and follow instructions in equipment operator's manuals and on product labels.
- Inspect equipment routinely for problems that may cause accidents.
- Discuss safety hazards and emergency procedures with your workers.
- Install approved rollover protective structures, protective enclosures, or protective frames on farm tractors.
- Make sure guards on farm equipment are replaced after maintenance.
- Review and follow instructions in material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and on labels that come with chemical products and communicate information on these hazards to your workers.
- Take precautions to prevent entrapment and suffocation caused by unstable surfaces of grain storage bins, silos, or hoppers. Never "walk the grain."
- Be aware that methane gas, carbon dioxide, ammonia, and hydrogen sulfide can form in unventilated grain silos and manure pits and can suffocate or poison workers or explode.
- Take advantage of safety equipment, such as bypass starter covers, power take-off master shields, and slow-moving vehicle emblems.

What are the benefits of improved safety and health practices?

Better safety and health practices reduce worker fatalities, injuries, and illnesses as well as associated costs such as workers' compensation insurance premiums, lost production, and medical expense.

Best management practice principles

Four guiding principles can help you to develop your own situation.

- 1) Isolate all potential contaminants from soil and water.
- 2) Do not discharge any waste material onto the ground or into surface water bodies.
- 3) Develop and implement a Conservation Plan and an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program to maximize efficient use of irrigation, fertilizers, and pesticides.
- 4) Seek the assistance of your county extension agent or independent consultant and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop specific plan for your farm.

The farmstead is a place where many electric hand and power tools are used

You can avoid accidents and health problems if you:

- Pick the right tool for the job.
- Replace or repair damaged tools.
- Make sure cords are in good repair when using electrical tools.
- Wear personal protective equipment such as ear plugs when operating loud equipment, and dust masks where there is dust from sawing, drilling, or sweeping.
- Always wear safety goggles when using electrical hand tools.
- Make sure all shields are in good shape to protect from flying debris and moving parts.
- Make sure the area around tools is kept free from clutter to prevent falls.
- Remember tools can be a real help when working on the farm. They can also be very harmful if not used with respect. Train young workers to respect the potential dangers of the equipment.

Sensible Farm Safety.

- Design a fenced, safe play area for children that is near the house and away from work activities.
- Inspect the farm on a regular basis for potential hazards, and correct such hazards immediately.
- Equip all barns and the farm shop with latches that can be locked or secured so children cannot enter.
- Always lower hydraulics, turn off agricultural machinery, and remove ignition keys before leaving machinery unattended.
- Never carry children on tractors or permit them into areas where agricultural machinery is used or stored, and never allow additional riders, especially children, on any agricultural machinery.
- Ensure that machinery is in safe operating condition.
- Carefully inspect the area around machinery before use to make sure no children are present.
- After any work interruption (e.g. lunch with the family), clarify who is to supervise children and confirm their location before work is resumed.
- Restrict operation of machinery to older adolescents and adults who possess the knowledge, skills, training, and physical capacity necessary for safe operation of this equipment.
- Farm equipment operators should observe and follow all applicable safety precautions when operating machinery including disengaging the PTO and stopping the tractor engine before approaching the machinery to make repairs, adjustments or perform maintenance.
- Farm equipment operators should avoid wearing clothing that is loose-fitting, or has loose ends that could be caught by moving machine parts and lead to entanglement.