



Why farm safety?

A serious farm injury or fatality can be devastating emotionally and financially to a farm operation. According to Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting statistics, an average of 104 people die in agriculture-related incidents in Canada every year. Think that's bad? For every farm fatality, there are 20 to 25 serious injuries. For every serious injury, there are 20 to 25 minor injuries. And for every minor injury, there are 20 to 25 close calls.

Who is touched by farm fatalities? While 47 per cent of all agricultural fatalities in Canada involve farm owners and operators, the remaining 53 per cent of fatal injuries are made up of other individuals working, living, or visiting the farm. So what's the good news? If you build a culture of safety on your farm, and encourage your family and farm employees to be a part of building that farm safety team, you can help reduce the risk of injury while growing your business and engaging your workforce.

HOW TO BUILD A CULTURE OF SAFETY ON YOUR FARM

Culture is made up of the beliefs, attitudes and practices that shape our behaviour in any given social group. In the farm workplace, a strong safety culture can be cultivated by the right mix of safety-first management and employee attitudes, policies and procedures. The following points will help you navigate your way to safer pastures.

Identify Work Expectations. Make sure to start out on the right foot when it comes to hiring employees. Before they set foot on your operation, stress that employees are valued and that their health and safety is a priority. Ensure they understand the importance of working safely. Ask them about their previous work experience. Did they receive any training? Remember to get copies of any certifications or accreditations they may have for your records. And check their references to ensure they have a positive safety record. Once hired, all employees should

have written job descriptions that outline their duties, responsibilities, specific performance objectives and safety expectations. Before a new employee begins work, review that job description with them to ensure they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities when it comes to work and safety. Make sure each employee has a copy of this job description or can access it upon request.

Insist on Proper Training. Proper training for every job task is essential for everyone who works on the farm. Determine what training each employee requires based on their specific job duties and ensure they receive that training before they begin work on that task. In some cases, they may be required to take a course or earn a specific certification. In other cases, they can learn from online training videos or on-the-job training such as demonstrations, hands-on learning, or job shadowing. Make sure to stay on top of training requirements and refresher courses



by keeping detailed records of their training history.

Equip with Proper Tools. Make sure to equip the right employee with the right tools. Whether you supply all the tools for your employees, or they bring their own, it is your responsibility to ensure they are using and have access to the proper tools for the task at hand.



Communicate Safety Policies and Standard Operating Procedures.

Whether it's a working alone policy, lock-out procedures, or pre-operational equipment check requirements, every farm should have clear and up-to-date written integrated safety standard operating procedures for their operation. Review these procedures with all staff and either provide them with copies of these documents or ensure they are stored in a location that is easy to access for all employees. Written safety policies are great but they aren't worth the paper they are written on unless they are accessible and clearly communicated to all employees.

Conduct Regular Safety Meetings. Before beginning work on a particular task or at the beginning of the work day, make time to hold regular safety meetings. Consider developing or making use of existing Toolbox Talks forms for specific tasks. Toolbox Talks provide supervisors with all the key safety points they should remember to convey to staff regarding a specific task, and include sign-off sheets so employees can verify that they have understood the directions being given to them connected with the task. While Toolbox Talks require a bit more paperwork, they do provide both employer and employee with the peace of mind of knowing what is required and how to undertake the task safely.

Encourage Employee Involvement. Your employees have the potential to be your biggest safety champions. Involve them in regular safety meetings and planning processes by asking for their input, questions, or concerns. Consider having your employees designate a staff member as an official safety representative who can bring concerns to your attention or help communicate safety issues to staff. If employees feel their input is valued, they are more likely to be engaged and provide critical feedback that could help your operation run more safely and efficiently. If you leave them out and simply enforce rules, your employees could become disengaged, skirt the rules or contribute to a less safe work environment.

Institute Clear Hazard Reporting Procedures. Workers need to know how to identify daily hazards, understand safety risks, and the steps they need to take to properly report and document incidents and hazards. Be sure to have an open-door policy for reporting safety concerns. Employees need to know that they can report hazards or incidents without being punished or ignored. If people do not feel that they can come to their employer with safety concerns, then they are not likely to inform their employer of close calls, injuries or new hazards. Reported incidents provide the employer and employee with the opportunity to make changes for improved safety.

Discuss Changes on the Farm.

Not all employees will be on the farm every day, so when you purchase new equipment, acquire livestock / or implement a new procedures, make sure to inform employees of any changes on the operation and any safety implications that may apply to their work such as new policies or training requirements. Communicating farm changes will ensure that employees aren't caught off guard and have the knowledge and tools required to respond to new circumstances safely.

Monitor and Measure

Performance. Supervisors, managers or employers should periodically shadow each employee as they perform their job tasks on the farm to ensure that the employee is able to adequately perform their job duties and responsibilities in a safe and efficient manner. While observing an employee, make sure to write down exactly what you are observing,

both positive, and negative, and store these findings in your employee's personnel file.

Provide Feedback and Coaching.

If a safety-related problem with an employee comes to your attention, address your concerns with them as soon as possible. Give the employee some examples of techniques to use to improve safety and always try to end on a positive note. Employees should leave feeling they received positive / constructive criticism. If you are still concerned about their performance, consider personally coaching them until they are performing the task safely or arrange for them to job shadow another employee who does the job safely until you are comfortable that they can perform the task appropriately.

Stamp Out Risky Behaviour.

An employee that continues to demonstrate a reckless disregard for their own safety, or the safety of others on the farm, in spite of multiple, documented, corrective steps, may need to be dismissed. While it's unfortunate to lose an employee, it's more unfortunate if someone gets hurt on your farm.

Lead By Example. It is essential that all employers, managers and supervisors set a positive example for their employees when it comes to safety. People are more likely to do what you do, than do what you say. Make sure all supervisors and managers understand their responsibility to set a positive example and are trained in all the appropriate safety requirements for your operation.

Be Compassionate. Whether it is your employee's health, personal growth or aspirations, demonstrate a genuine interest and concern for their well-being. When you have sincere concern for your employees, they will respect you as the employer and strive to work safely.

Encourage Continuous Improvement. What motivates your employees? Find out what drives them, how they take instruction, how they learn (visual, hands-on or verbal) and instruct / train your employee in the way that works best for them.



Make Safety Fun. Last but not least, instead of the same old safety meeting, mix things up with some videos, group discussions or interactive problem-solving exercises. Making safety fun and exciting will encourage employee involvement and increase the likelihood that they will report safety hazards or concerns on the job.

Cultivating Safety

There are several steps you can take to change the culture of your farm for the better. While every farm is different, the need for a safe work environment is universal, so cultivate an open, positive working

relationship with your employees based on communication and trust and you will be well on your way to building a successful farm safety team.

Resources

BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia
Agriculture Council
bcac.bc.ca

Farm and Ranch Safety
and Health Association
farsha.bc.ca

WorkSafe BC
worksafebc.com

ALBERTA

Alberta Federation
of Agriculture
afaonline.ca

Alberta Farm Safety
Program
[www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/aet623](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/aet623)

Alberta Farm Safety
Centre
abfarmsafety.com

Workers' Compensation
Board of Alberta
wcb.ab.ca

SASKATCHEWAN

Agricultural Producers
Association of
Saskatchewan
apas.ca

Saskatchewan
Abilities Council
abilitiescouncil.sk.ca

The Agricultural Health
and Safety Network
aghealth.usask.ca

Workers' Compensation
Board of Saskatchewan
wcb.sask.ca

Government of
Saskatchewan –
Labour Relations
and Workplace Safety
sasklabourrelationsboard.com

MANITOBA

Keystone Agricultural
Producers
kap.mb.ca

Workplace Safety
and Health
gov.mb.ca/labour/safety

Workers Compensation
Board of Manitoba
wcb.mb.ca

SafeWork
safemanitoba.com

ONTARIO

Ontario Federation
of Agriculture
ofa.on.ca

Workplace Safety &
Prevention Services
healthandsafetyontario.ca

Ontario Ministry of Labour
labour.gov.on.ca

Workplace Safety
and Insurance Board
of Ontario
wsib.on.ca

QUEBEC

L'Union des producteurs
agricoles
upa.qc.ca

Commission de la santé
et de la sécurité du travail
du Québec
csst.qc.ca

NEW BRUNSWICK

Agricultural Alliance
of New Brunswick
fermenbfarm.ca

Safety Services
New Brunswick
safetyervicesnb.ca

WorkSafeNB
worksafenb.ca

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Newfoundland and
Labrador Federation
of Agriculture
nlfa.ca

Service Newfoundland
and Labrador –
Occupational Health
and Safety
serviceni.gov.nl.ca/ohs

Workplace Health,
Safety and Compensation
Commission of
Newfoundland and
Labrador
whscc.nl.ca

NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Federation
of Agriculture
nsfa-fane.ca

Society of Farm Safety
Nova Scotia
farmsafetyns.ca

Workers' Compensation
Board of Nova Scotia
wcb.ns.ca

Nova Scotia Labour
and Advanced Education
– Health and Safety
gov.ns.ca/lae/healthandsafety

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Prince Edward Island
Federation of Agriculture
peifa.ca

Workers Compensation
Board of Prince Edward
Island
wcb.pe.ca

Prince Edward
Island Public Service
Commission –
Occupational Health
and Safety
gov.pe.ca/psc/ohs



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