



## Southern Alberta seed farm embraces culture of safety

By Erin Kelly for the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

Much has changed at Stamp Seeds since it was founded by Richard and Marian Stamp more than 40 years ago.

“Our farm keeps changing as agriculture keeps changing. We have a pretty dynamic farm; there’s never a day that goes by without something exciting happening,” explains Richard. “But that is also why it’s been important to have a culture of safety on the farm.”

Over the past decade, the pedigree seed farm located in the southern Alberta hamlet of Enchant has steadily increased its production, which has seen its size reach some 7,000 acres and the need for more employees. Those changes have been accompanied by the return of Richard and Marian’s three sons – Greg, Nathan, and Matthew – who now manage the day-to-day operations at the farm, along with an intensified approach to safety.

“We have more moving parts at the farm compared to 10 years ago, so we realized we couldn’t keep doing things the way we were and needed to put that culture of safety up front,” says Nathan, who manages farm operations and agronomy. “That culture of safety is crucial for us. We make [safety] a part of everything we do because everyone wants to go home safely.”

Despite the farm’s tremendous growth, being family-oriented remains at the core of Stamp Seeds and is a leading reason for placing such a high priority on establishing a culture of safety.

“Every farm and every family are different. For us, all of these people who come to work on our farm are our family, and we want to keep them safe,” Richard explains.





That family focus is why Stamp Seeds ensures that everyone working on the farm is involved in safety plans, which both Richard and Nathan say has been the key to their safety program’s success. That includes mandatory safety meetings each month that promote open communication among staff by encouraging everyone to speak up about any potential concerns or hazards.

“We tell everyone that if you’re driving one of our vehicles and there is a stop sign, if you don’t stop, you’re going to get fired – and that goes for me, too. You need to talk about safety, but you also need to live it,” says Richard, noting the value of leading by example. “It’s important to make safety a priority and invest the necessary time and work because it will pay off in the long run.”

For the Stamps, the investment in safety goes beyond on-farm protocols. They are also mindful of their workers’ personal well-being, with a health benefits program among the initiatives introduced at the farm in recent years.

“If our employees take care of themselves, that in turn directly impacts what goes on at the farm,” Nathan explains. “There is an important correlation between someone’s well-being – both physical and mental – and their work and safety on the farm.”

With a new generation at the helm of Stamp Seeds, the farm will undoubtedly continue to evolve and grow in the years ahead, and that most certainly includes enhancing its culture of safety.

“Safety isn’t something you can get complacent about; you have to keep maintaining protocols and improving as things change,” says Nathan. “We strongly believe that if you can’t do a job safely, then it’s not worth doing.”

Adds Richard, “You can always fix a truck, but you can’t fix people as easily.”

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW) is a public campaign held annually during the third week of March that focuses on the importance of safe agriculture. The 2020 campaign, Safe & Strong Farms: Grow an AgSafe Canada, takes place March 15-21. CASW is presented by Farm Credit Canada. For more information, visit [agsafetyweek.ca](http://agsafetyweek.ca).

