

OSHA FactSheet

Farm Safety

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.

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
- Grain bins
- Hand tools
- Highway traffic
- Lifting
- Livestock handling
- Machinery/Equipment
- Manure pits
- Mud
- Noise
- Ponds
- Silos
- Slips/Trips/Falls
- Sun/Heat
- Toxic gases
- Tractors
- Wells

High Risk Factors on Farms

The following factors may increase risk of injury or illness for farm workers:

- **Age** – Injury rates are highest among children age 15 and under and adults over 65.
- **Equipment and Machinery** – Most farm accidents and fatalities involve machinery. Proper machine guarding and doing equipment maintenance according to manufacturers' 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.

- **Medical Care** – Hospitals and emergency medical care are typically not readily accessible in rural areas near farms.

How You Can Improve Farm Safety

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 exposures. Be especially alert to hazards that may affect children and the elderly. Minimize hazards by carefully selecting the 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 illnesses and injuries on the 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 tractors.
- Make sure that 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.

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 expenses. A safer and more healthful workplace improves morale and productivity.

Additional Information on Safety and Health

For more information about farm safety, visit OSHA's website at www.osha.gov/SLTC/agriculturalopera

tions, the National Safety Council at www.nsc.org/farmsafe/facts.htm, the Environmental Protection Agency at www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/workers/workers.htm, and the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/nasd/menu/topic/topic.html. In addition, OSHA has a variety of materials and tools available elsewhere on its website at www.osha.gov.

OSHA Publications

OSHA has an extensive publications program. For a listing of free or sales items, visit OSHA's website at www.osha.gov/pls/publications/pubindex.list or contact the OSHA Publications Office, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, N-3101, Washington, DC 20210. Telephone (202) 693-1888 or fax to (202) 693-2498.

Contacting OSHA

To report an emergency, file a complaint or seek OSHA advice, assistance or products, call (800) 321-OSHA or contact your nearest OSHA regional or area office.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

For more complete information:



U.S. Department of Labor

www.osha.gov

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