

SafeFARM

Health and safety information for Alberta farmers

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New course will teach farm workers strategies to stay safe *By Lisa Guenther*

A new farm safety course aims to teach critical thinking strategies to agricultural workers to help reduce workplace injuries and minimize risks.

“The research tells us that new and young workers are one-third more likely to be injured than older and more experienced workers. The first six months of work are the highest risk for new workers,” says Laurel Aitken, citing Work Safe Alberta.

Aitken is a Farm Safety Coordinator with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. She notes that because agriculture is a diverse industry, it is challenging to develop content and processes to cover every situation. Aitken wanted to offer a farm safety course to teach workers a strategy they could use as they moved from task to task. Human Development Consultants Ltd. (HDC) had a course that seemed like a good fit.

Aitken worked with an ad hoc farm safety advisory committee and HDC to adapt the course to the agriculture industry. The end result is SafeThink

Agriculture Alberta, which teaches farm workers a critical thinking strategy to identify hazards in any situation, both on and off the farm.

“The strategy provides a framework to hang new safety knowledge on,” says Art Deane, HDC’s manager of SafeThink. “People learn to think critically before and during a task. After they complete the task, they need to make sure the area is safe for



A group of SafeThink Agriculture Alberta trainers learn how to present safe thinking strategies to others.

the next person.”

Using the SafeThink Agriculture strategy, workers ask themselves a series of questions to determine if a task is hazardous. Questions cover hazardous materials; objects, motion, and force; non-ambient conditions; electricity; and any changes that could lead to a hazardous situation. If workers find that the task may be hazardous, they then ask themselves more detailed questions to pinpoint

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Farm Safety Tips

- Overhead powerlines can kill farmers. When transporting equipment, always know the height of your tallest structure. When in doubt, call your power company. Do not make guesses when it comes to powerlines and equipment.
- Repetitive movements can cause long-term damage to muscles and tendons. Use back support devices for repetitive lifting, and remember to lift with your leg muscles rather than your back. Take breaks and stretch out muscles frequently to prevent strains.
- Operating farm machinery can be an intimidating task. Make sure all workers that are required to operate equipment have been trained properly. Ensure the worker is confident enough to proceed with the equipment. Keep the operator's manual close by for easy access.
- Over 70% of farm fatalities between 1990 and 2005 were machine related. Be sure to always use roll over protective structures and seat belts when operating farm equipment. Also, ensure all power sources and machine engines are shut down prior to dismounting equipment.
- Children of any age should never be taken for a ride on tractors or other farm machinery. Extra riders are at a high risk for falling off or being run over. Remember the rule: One seat; one rider!
- It is a good idea to have someone trained in first aid on each farm work team. Keep well stocked first aid kits and updated fire extinguishers on hand at each work site. Be sure workers know how to use a fire extinguisher. And keep important phone numbers on hand in case of emergency.

New distracted driving law expected to come into effect mid-2011

Source: Alberta Transportation

Work continues on the development of regulations and a public education campaign to support Alberta's new distracted driving law. Bill 16, the Traffic Safety (Distracted Driving) Amendment Act, 2010, received Royal Assent in December 2010 and is expected to come into effect in the coming months.

The most comprehensive legislation of its kind in Canada, it restricts the use of hand-held cellphones and activities like texting, reading, writing, personal grooming, and the use of other electronic devices while driving. The proposed fine for distracted driving will be \$172 with no demerit points.

Drivers engaged in any of the identified activities can be charged under this amendment. A distracted driver

could face additional charges if other violations are committed such as running a red light or making an improper lane change.

This legislation will also complement the current driving without due care and attention law - serious offence with a fine of \$402 and six demerit points by giving law enforcement agencies more flexibility to deal with a wider range of driving behaviours.

Several studies show that 20 to 30 per cent of all collisions involve driver distraction, and distracted drivers are three times more likely to be involved in a collision than attentive drivers. Alberta is addressing this serious traffic safety issue with legislation that is practical, effective and enforceable. Our goal is to make Alberta's roads safer.

Be ATV safety conscious

Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. (2010). *Common Messages for ATV Safety: A Guide for Injury Prevention Stakeholders*. Retrieved May 18, 2011, from http://acicr.ca/Upload/ATV_Messages_Stakeholders_May2010.pdf

When operated safely, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are time-saving workhorses on most farming operations. But when used improperly, they can become dangerous machines capable of creating tragic incidents.

To ensure safe use of ATVs on the farm, consider the following messages.

ATVs can cause serious injury or death. ATV injuries can be reduced by following these safety practices:

- Follow all ATV manufacturers' guidelines.
- Children under 16 years of age have an increased risk of injury and death on ATVs.
- ATVs weigh hundreds of kilograms and are harder to control than they appear.
- Rollover events are the most com-

mon cause of serious ATV-related injury and can happen even on flat ground.

- ATVs cause more injuries than any other consumer product.
- No child/youth under 16 years of age should operate an adult ATV. Ensure your child/youth only rides an ATV that is appropriate for their age, weight, and maturity. Follow manufacturers' recommendations.**
- Children and adolescents are injured as drivers of and passengers on ATVs.
 - In Alberta, children and adolescents accounted for 15% of all ATV-related deaths.
 - Children and youth are at particular risk as they do not have the physical strength, control, coordination or judgment of an adult.

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Canada FarmSafe - a national agricultural safety and health plan

Make it yours!

By Diane Wreford, *CASA*

With support from ag safety professionals, researchers and producers, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association has developed a safety plan template Canadian farmers and ranchers can use to draw up their own practical and comprehensive safety plan. The guidelines offer a straightforward procedure for incorporating safety into a farm business. The template builds on the economic practices most farmers already use. It delivers a safe farm. And it's called Canada FarmSafe.

In a nutshell, here's how it works:

1. Write a General Policy Statement for Safety and Health for your farm

- ✓ Post a brief statement on: employer commitment, responsibilities and everyone's involvement in taking responsibility for safety and health on your farm.

2. Identify the Hazards

- ✓ Document the process for recognizing risks to safety and health on the job.
- ✓ Write a statement to outline how hazards will be identified.

a. Inspections

- ✓ Identify hazards and conditions that can pose a threat to health or wellbeing. Objectively assess work processes to identify other potential risks.
- ✓ Look at physical, chemical, biological, environmental, ergonomic and psychological/sociological conditions that could harm people on your farm.
- ✓ Determine who will do the inspections, how often they will occur and how you will address identified issues.

3. Control the Hazards

- ✓ Write a statement setting out how



hazards will be controlled, understanding the following:

a. Wellness

- ✓ Personal well-being influences workplace safety and health.
- ✓ Document procedures on your farm to promote wellness.

b. Safe Work Procedures

- ✓ Documented safe work procedures provide your quality assurance tool for communicating expectations for work performance both from a qualitative and safety perspective. They eliminate the 'you never told me' statement if there is a system failure.

c. Emergencies

- ✓ Ensure everyone understands the potential of an incident occurring, knows whom to contact and resources that are immediately available.

d. Training

- ✓ Start a process to ensure that work is consistently done safely and correctly.
- ✓ Keep records of what was taught, to whom and when.

e. Investigations

- ✓ If there is a failure and something unexpected happens, learn from it and understand what contributed to the failure and how it can be prevented in the future.
- ✓ Establish the process for who will determine all the contributing factors that caused the incident and what actions need

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Biosecurity — Act on it!

What is biosecurity?

Biosecurity refers to practices designed to prevent, reduce or eliminate the introduction and incidental spread of disease among livestock.

Facts about biosecurity:

- ➔ Minimizes introduction of disease onto farms
- ➔ Reduces transmission of disease between animals
- ➔ Limits the spread of disease between farms
- ➔ Controls the spread of disease between animals and people
- ➔ Is about identifying risk and taking action to prevent rather than react to problems
- ➔ Supports sustainable agriculture
- ➔ Represents good business and increases competitiveness
- ➔ Doesn't have to be expensive to be effective
- ➔ Prevents unintended and expensive incidents.
- ➔ Risks include livestock, people, supplies, equipment and barns
- ➔ Depends on monitoring herd and flock health
- ➔ Works best when people work together
- ➔ Influences animal health, food safety and public health
- ➔ Starts on the farm
- ➔ Requires a plan with regular review by a veterinarian
- ➔ Is about preventing rather than reacting to problems

For more information on biosecurity, go to [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv10708](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv10708).

Bale handling safety 101

Large hay bales, some weighing up to 800 kg, have killed and seriously injured many farm workers in Alberta. Both round and rectangular bales can fall on tractor and forklift operators, topple off stacks and vehicles onto workers or bystanders, and collapse when stacks fail.

To increase safety procedures while ensuring the job gets done, look for hazards relating to handling, baler operation, stacking and transporting.

Identify the hazards

Handling:

- Ensure no children play near hay balers, carriers and stackers.
- Properly train operators handling tractors, front-end loaders or forklifts.
- Tractors with cabs, FOPS (falling object protective structure) or four-poster ROPS are highly recommended. Two-poster tractor ROPS offer no operator protection from bales falling back off of forks or bale-loading frames.
- Ensure bale-loading attachments on tractors and forklifts are secure and well fitted.
- Carry bales as low to the ground as possible.
- Ensure sufficient counterbalance on tractor or forklift vehicle.
- Hydraulic control valve should be specific to the front-end loader attachment.

Baler operation:

- Ensure baler is properly connected to the tractor.
- Make certain adequate safety guards are fitted.
- Nobody should ever be allowed to ride on the baler.
- Prevent others from getting too close to the baler.
- Watch for and clear any build-up

of loose, combustible material in the baler.

- Ensure an updated fire extinguisher is fitted to the machine.
- Stop engine, disengage PTO and apply fly wheel brake prior to making baler adjustments or repairs.
- Extra care and attention should be made when reversing or turning the machine.
- Work during the day when there is adequate lighting.

Stacking:

- Load and stack on even ground.
- Stacks should be clear of overhead powerlines.
- Stacked round bales should be adequately chocked and the borders posted.
- Watch for damaged bales at base of stack.
- Stack bales tightly and at a stable height.
- Do not stack bales higher than safe operating height of farm tractor or forklift.

- Do not allow children to play on stacked bales, particularly during stacking or unstacking
- Do not handle more bales than is safe for the loader.

Transporting:

- Carry heavy loads of bales with a sturdy trailer.
- Ensure proper restraining frames on the back and front of trailer
- Use fitted hooks so ropes can be used to secure load.
- Watch for overhead powerlines on or near roads.
- Avoid rough terrain that can cause bales to become unstable. Travel at safe speeds at all times.
- People should never ride on loaded hay trailers. This is highly dangerous.

Assess the risk

Check each hazard that has been spotted to assess:

1. Probability – how likely is this hazard to injure someone, and

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When handling or transporting bales, ensure operators carry bales as low to the ground as possible for stability.

and predict the hazards and consequences. They also identify ways to control risk.

Lori Blake and her family run a cow-calf and feedlot operation near Hanna, Alberta. Blake also teaches farm safety to young children through the Alberta Farm Safety Centre, and recently signed on to be one of the first rural instructors for the SafeThink Agriculture course.

“Agriculture is a very important part of my life, and I just have a real passion to keep people safe,” says Blake.

Blake sees the strategy as a way of improving communication between everyone on the farm. She adds that some people may be afraid to ask questions, while others might assume that everyone knows what’s safe and what’s not.

“Something that might be common sense for me might not be for someone else,” says Blake.

Blake indicates that she now uses the SafeThink Agriculture strategy on a daily basis around her farm and

feedlot. “When you’re on a cattle operation, there are always objects, force and motion. It made me plan our day a little bit differently.”

Getting people to internalize the SafeThink Agriculture strategy is one of the goals of the course developers. “Once people have internalized the strategy, they have a shared safety value. Every individual in the group encourages each other to apply the thinking strategy. They’ve created a culture of safety,” says Gordon Shand, president of HDC.

Aitken notes that Growing Forward has been instrumental in getting the SafeThink Agriculture course off the ground.

“Growing Forward funding allowed us to hold numerous focus groups and meetings to gather input, and hold the pilot training program. These meetings also allowed us to make extensive revisions to the course manual to make it even more relevant to the agriculture industry. We would never have been able to take it to this level without Growing

Forward,” says Aitken.

Aitken anticipates the SafeThink Agriculture courses to start later this summer. She hopes to see both employers and employees attending so that everyone in the workplace is on the same page when it comes to safety.

Courses will be 16 hours total. The course can be broken up over four to eight sessions to allow workers and employers to apply the concepts on the farm between sessions. Upcoming sessions will be promoted locally, and posted online at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety.

**TOMORROW -
YOUR REWARD
FOR WORKING
SAFELY TODAY**

- Youth-size ATVs might reduce the risk of injury.
- Use questions from The North American Guidelines for Children’s Agricultural Tasks (www.nagcat.org) to find out if your child or youth is ready to ride a youth-size ATV for chores.
- Anyone under 16 years of age operating a youth-size ATV should have constant, close, visual supervision by an adult.

Wear an approved helmet with face and eye protection.

- Head injuries are the leading cause of serious injury and death in ATV-related injury events.
- Facial injuries frequently happen to ATV operators.
- Wear over-the-ankle boots with heels, sturdy gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants.

Drive Sober – Alcohol, drugs and ATVs don’t mix.

- The consumption of alcohol and/or drugs (medication or illicit) is a major factor in ATV injuries and deaths.
- Even a couple of drinks will impair the ability to operate an ATV.

- Drinking alcohol and operating an ATV could result in an impaired driving charge.

Refuse to carry or be a passenger on ATVs built for one person.

- A passenger on a single rider ATV reduces the driver’s ability to stop, turn or shift their weight. A passenger will make the ATV unbalanced.
- Only carry one passenger on a tandem ATV in the designated passenger seat.
- Never carry a passenger under 12 years of age or too small to grab the hand rails or plant their feet on the footrests of a tandem ATV.

Take an ATV operator training course.

- Formal hands-on training is needed to understand how to avoid ATV risks.
- Look for an ATV training course offered through reputable organizations such as the Alberta Safety Council.

