



# Safe FARM

Health and safety information for Alberta farmers

Winter 2014

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## Eliminate slips, trips and falls *By Kenda Lubeck, ARD Farm Safety Coordinator*

Work around the farm may have seasonal peaks, but even when the push to finish fall work is over, there is always more to do. Cleaning equipment, performing routine maintenance, and winterizing machines and buildings sometimes requires workers to maneuver around objects with varied and uneven footing, and often includes work from heights. This subjects workers to the hazards of slips, trips and falls.

footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips are wet or oily surfaces, weather hazards, loose, unanchored rugs or mats and flooring or other surfaces that do not have the same degree of traction in all areas.



*Take tread and support into consideration when choosing footwear. Make sure you have adequate traction to prevent falls due to slippery conditions.*

In Canada, over 42,000 workers are injured annually due to incidents of falling. Statistics show that the majority of falls happen on the same level resulting from slips and trips. The rest are falls from a height. Injuries from slips, trips and falls on a farm are preventable, providing the hazards that cause them are eliminated and workers take the time to do their job safely.

**Slips**  
Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between the

**Trips**  
Trips happen when a worker's foot collides with an object causing a loss of balance and consequently a fall. Common causes of tripping are poor vision (obstructed view or poor lighting), clutter, uneven surfaces and ropes, hoses or cables lying uncovered and unsecured. Another common cause of trips may be worker fatigue or prior injury leading to restricted and tight muscles.

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## Items for your first aid kit

The following is a list of first aid contents and supplies recommended by St. John Ambulance. This is the standard used by other industries for emergency first aid treatment. The list for a Number One First Aid Kit contains enough material for up to nine workers.

- ➔ 12 compression bandages (10 cm x 10 cm)
- ➔ 2 compression bandages (15 cm x 15 cm)
- ➔ 3 triangular bandages (102 cm x 102 cm x 142 cm)
- ➔ 2 conform bandages (7.5 cm x 4.5 cm)
- ➔ 1 elastic support bandage (7.5 cm x 4.5 cm)
- ➔ 1 kit tweezers
- ➔ 10 gauze pads (10 cm x 10 cm)
- ➔ 4 vinyl gloves (large pair per bag)
- ➔ 1 face shield
- ➔ 1 first aid pocket guide
- ➔ 1 safety pins bag – assorted sizes
- ➔ 1 waterproof waste bag
- ➔ 1 first aid scissors
- ➔ 10 wound washer packets with .02% Benzalkonium (5 cm x 5.5 cm)
- ➔ 1 tape (2.5 cm x 4.5 cm)
- ➔ 1 adhesive bandage – assorted (25 pieces)
- ➔ 1 secure container

## Make your own farm first aid kit

Source: ARD Farm Safety website; [agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety](http://agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety)

Farms are often in remote areas where help for a medical emergency can seem like an eternity. Many times a quick response is critical. If you know first aid, you could greatly improve an injured person's chance of survival.

You can take a first aid course, or go one step better and organize a course for a group of your family members or coworkers. Get information on first aid courses in your area that are specifically farm-related. You will be trained to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and to deal with wounds, burns, breaks and shock.

The minimum basics for first aid on the farm:

- Get trained. Then make sure to update your training as recommended. St. John's Ambulance is one choice for first aid training. Call the St. John's Ambulance provincial office at 1-800-665-7114 for more information.
- Locate first aid kits in farm buildings and machinery. Know where the closest kit is to your work area. Ensure first aid kits are well labelled so they are easy to find.
- List emergency numbers at each phone or in each worker's mobile, along with legal land locations or rural addresses to give to the emergency operator.
- If possible, have a mobile phone

with you out in the field. If you or someone else gets hurt away from the farm yard, you can call for help.

- In an emergency, stay calm.

The victim will be reassured by

your confidence. Administer first aid. Seek proper medical attention as necessary.

Detailed and current information is readily available on the internet. Many websites list several types of first aid kits, depending on the number of workers and distance from the main work site along with other helpful information to help you get prepared for your specific operation.



*A complete first aid kit is vital for any farming operation.*

### Search and substitute

Every farm family should have several first aid kits. By having a complete first aid kit in each busy work area, such as in the tractor, shop or kitchen, you can be prepared to save a limb or even a life should an incident occur.

Putting together your farm first aid kit begins by looking around your home. You can use your imagination; dressings and bandages can be made from old sheets, or hockey tape could be substituted for adhesive tape. Items can be stored in a protective container such as a clean toolbox or a small picnic cooler that latches shut.

Start your search for these items today! 🌻

# Winter storms and your farm

Source: *The Center for Food Security & Public Health, Iowa State University, and the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture; prep4agthreats.org/Assets/Factsheets/Winter-Storms-and-Your-Farm.pdf*



The impact of winter storms on farms can involve a number of issues. Farm buildings can be damaged due to heavy snow or ice accumulation. Power failures or fuel shortages can impact animal production. Prepare now to protect your farm during winter storms.

## Before a winter storm

### • Stay informed

☞ Monitor for severe winter weather in your area through Environment Canada at [weather.gc.ca](http://weather.gc.ca)

### • Know the terminology

☞ **Winter Storm WATCH:** Severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow and/or ice, are possible for your area in the next 12 to 36 hours. Prepare now!

☞ **Winter Storm WARNING:** Severe winter conditions are expected in the next 12 to 24 hours; 10 to 20 centimetres of snow or sleet, or one-half of a centimetre or more of ice is expected. Seek shelter immediately!

☞ **Blizzard WARNING:** Snow and strong winds (gusts up to 55 kilometres per hour or greater) will combine to produce a blinding snow (near zero visibility), deep drifts, and life-threatening wind chill; expected to occur for three hours or longer.

• **Be prepared for power outages or conditions requiring you to remain at home for several days.**

• **Develop an emergency plan for water and feed resources.**

☞ Obtain emergency supplies of forage and grain.

☞ Identify emergency resources for water.

☞ Have a list of suppliers, truckers, and people that can help with the animals, especially if normal working conditions are disrupted.

☞ Stockpile emergency materials.

☞ Standby electric generator for emergency power.

☞ Sandbags, shovel, road salt or ice melt.

• **Winterize any buildings that may provide shelter for your family, livestock or equipment.**

☞ Install storm shutters, doors and windows.

☞ Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows.

☞ Check the roof structure for its ability to hold heavy weight accumulations of snow and ice.

☞ Repair any roof leaks.

☞ Add insulation, insulated doors, storm windows, or thermal-pane windows.

☞ Insulate any water lines that run along exterior walls so they will be less likely to freeze.

## During a winter storm

• **Stay informed.**

☞ Listen to local news and weather channels for situation developments and road closures.

• **Have an emergency plan in place for farm workers.**

☞ Have shelter and extra food, water and blankets.

• **If you are caught outside during a storm:**

☞ Try to find shelter out of the wind.

☞ Stay dry and cover all exposed parts of your body.

## After a winter storm

• **Stay safe during cleanup.**

☞ Wear sturdy shoes or boots, layered clothing, hat and gloves.

☞ Avoid overexertion. Strain from the cold and the hard labour could cause a heart attack – a major cause of death in the winter.

☞ Pace yourself, work slowly and rest frequently.

☞ Make sure you have good footing when lifting the snow shovel.

☞ Take your time and lift small amounts.

☞ Lift snow/shovel properly to avoid back injuries.

• **Use caution with gas-powered equipment.**

☞ Dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated by gas-powered equipment as well as alternative heating sources.

☞ Use these items only in well ventilated areas.

• **Account for your inventory.**

☞ Note any livestock losses.

☞ Check buildings and fences for damage. (E.g., downed power lines or trees, accumulated snow or ice).

☞ Take photographs of all damage for insurance or emergency assistance purposes. ☀

# Shortcuts in safety? Not on the farm!

By Nicole Hornett, ARD Farm Safety Coordinator

Most of us are familiar with Murphy's law: the notorious 'law' of nature concluding anything that can go wrong will go wrong.

Following in Murphy's philosophical footsteps, Professor Charles Issawi drafted up some additional 'laws'. One of his observations really resonated with me in terms of safety on the farm:

"A shortcut is the longest distance between two points."

What does Mr. Issawi mean by this? I decided to look at three ways agricultural workers might take a shortcut to decide if the time savings outweigh the safety risks.

**Shortcut One:** Leaving the combine running while clearing a clogged header.

**Concern:** Once the blockage is cleared, the machine could re-engage



*Wearing appropriate footwear and keeping the steps clear is also essential to avoiding slips and falls from machinery.*

while your hands and arms are still inside.

**Best Plan:** Shut off the equipment, set the brake and put the key in your pocket before reaching in.

**Shortcut Two:** Exiting by jumping down off machinery instead of properly using the steps or ladder.

**Concern:** Shoe laces, clothing or jewelry could get stuck, or you could slip as you push away from the machinery, resulting in cuts, bruises or worse from contact with the metal steps or ground.

**Best Plan:** Descend using the steps and handrails in a controlled fashion. The exception to this is in an emergency, like contacting an overhead power line, when you need to jump to exit due to fire.

**Shortcut Three:** Stepping over the power take-off (PTO) shaft instead of walking around the equipment.

**Concern:** A PTO shaft rotates very quickly. An average PTO shaft can spin between nine and 16 times per second. Clothing, hair, jewelry, shoelaces or hoodie strings can quickly become entangled resulting in severe injury or death.

**Best Plan:** Pocket the key and walk around the entire unit. Enjoy the time to stretch your body and get some fresh air! Have a good



*A PTO shaft (yellow) connects the tractor to a trailed implement. It transfers mechanical power from a tractor to an implement such as a mower, manure spreader or grain auger.*

look around and under the vehicle and implement as you walk especially to observe for anything that may have changed since you parked.

Each of these machinery "shortcuts" may only save about 30 to 60 seconds, yet come with huge risks to personal safety. An injury could result in days, weeks, months or even years of downtime. If keeping safe on the job simply requires rethinking shortcuts, consider sparing the 30 to 60 seconds required.

Now I see what Professor Issawi was on to! ☀

*Ensure machinery is turned off and the key is in your pocket before performing any kind of maintenance such as clearing debris.*



# Use the winter to train for safety

By Kenda Lubeck, ARD Farm Safety Coordinator

It's the time of year when some farmers take a step back from their hectic physical farm work and make assessments for the future. If you and your family or work crew made it through the year with no injuries, you either had safety in mind, or you were lucky. However, farming is not the occupation to take luck for granted. Be pro-active and use this winter to ensure next season's farm work is injury- and incident-free.

## Training

Now is the time to plan for training during the winter months. Some courses you might consider taking:

**First Aid.** This is a must for any farm. It is advisable for all workers to have some sort of first aid training, whether it be first aid on the farm, emergency first aid, standard first aid or higher. There are a few options to access training. St. John's Ambulance has a great program

and they are available toll free at 1-800-665-7114.

**Equipment operator's training.** This is particularly important for new and young farm workers. Equipment such as skid steers, loaders, and tractors are powerful and have the potential to severely injure workers. Look for courses in your area.

**Chemical-related courses.** Farmers working with pesticides, ammonia and in the presence of sour gas will benefit from courses such as pesticide applicators, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) or H<sub>2</sub>S Alive.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training.** For those handling chemicals, respirator training will be beneficial. For anyone working from heights, a fall protection course is recommended.

**Livestock safety.** Virtually any course involving livestock includes aspects

of safety. For those using horses to tend cattle, perhaps a horsemanship or ranch hand course will help. Others to consider are stockman courses and horse/livestock hauling.

**Machinery maintenance.** Well cared for machinery and equipment means increased safety during use. Take a quick course in how to care for and properly maintain your equipment to decrease the risk of down-time due to machinery failure.

**Fire extinguisher training.** There are many types of fire extinguishers, and they can be intimidating to operate. It is a good idea to take this training before you need it.

**Safety systems training.** At the basic level, this type of training course will teach participants the value of a safety program and how to get started setting one up. There are many courses aimed at different industries; farmers should look for a

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## Eliminate slips, trips and falls continued from page 1

Both slips and trips result from an unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground. It is important to keep work areas clutter-free, keep items in a consistent location to prevent unfamiliarity, select proper footwear with adequate tread, and maintain an appropriate pace when walking.

Good housekeeping is the first and most important step in preventing falls due to slips and trips. Some things to consider are:

- Clean all indoor spills immediately. When indoor footing is slippery, be sure to mark the area.
- Mark all slick surfaces outside. If the footing is frozen or icy use a de-icing product such as salt to improve traction.
- Remove obstacles from walkways

and always keep work areas free of clutter.

- Secure (by nailing, tacking, taping, etc.) mats, rugs, floor boards, and other work surfaces that do not lay flat.
- Cover and secure cables, ropes and hoses that are being used for any length of time.
- Ensure proper lighting in work areas. This includes replacing burnt out light bulbs and repairing faulty switches.
- Maintain all indoor flooring and highlight any changes in elevation such as steps or landings.

When working from heights, proper fall protection procedures must be used to protect workers from serious injury or death.

It is also important to choose the proper footwear for the job. Since there is no footwear with anti-slip properties for every condition, research such as consultation with the manufacturer is highly recommended. Properly fitting footwear increases comfort and prevents fatigue which in turn improves safety for the worker.

Finally, workers should adjust their pace and stride for the footing conditions and take into consideration any personal factors such as stress or fatigue.

Slips and trips are quite personal incidents; however, they can happen to anyone and are easily preventable. Be sure to identify potential hazards and take action to eliminate them.



# Workforce development update By Jodi Murphy

## Attract and keep your people!

You are an expert in your operation. So how are you doing in attracting and retaining your people? Take advantage of a no-charge service offered by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development to review the people practices in your business. You will spend one day with an expert advisor to receive immediate coaching and ideas to build on your current people programs. You will also receive a confidential follow-up report outlining recommendations for your farming or processing business. Recommendations may be eligible for the Workforce Development Program – Retention Improvement Grant.

Contact Scott Dundas at 403-556-4245 or [scott.dundas@gov.ab.ca](mailto:scott.dundas@gov.ab.ca) for more information on how to get started.

## Workforce Development Program now accepting applications

The Workforce Development Program provides assistance to address specific workforce issues in agricultural production and agri-processing sectors.

“Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) offers funding under this program,” says Al Dooley, agriculture labour recruitment specialist, ARD, Edmonton. “There are three components to the program – recruitment, retention and productivity. The program offers up to \$25,000 to companies or producers to help them with these three activities.”

The retention component provides assistance to contract human resources expertise to identify and coach on retention strategies, retention improvements and supervisory training to reduce work turnover.

The productivity component focuses on funding advisors to provide coaching on process improvements, automation, or productivity improvements combined with environmentally sustainable business management practices. The recruitment component helps with travel assistance when recruiting workers outside of Alberta.

Dooley says applying under the program is relatively simple. “We require a completed application form and a detailed project proposal. If it’s for the retention or productivity component of the grant, we’d also require the consultant’s report when it is complete.”

For more information on the Workforce Development Program, email [alan.dooley@gov.ab.ca](mailto:alan.dooley@gov.ab.ca) or phone 780-422-0907.

## Use the winter to train for safety continued from page 5

generic course provided by a private consultant or a reputable post-secondary institution.


### Training plan for your operation

Pull out your farm safety plan (or develop one if you haven’t already)

and in it decide what kind of training program your family members and employees should take. This can be formal training such as mentioned, or simply going over the plan you have in place along with any farm workplace protocols.

Take into consideration protocols for:

- Hazard assessment and control
- Record keeping
- Communications
- Emergency situations

Planning now for a safe and prosperous year ahead is a sound investment for the future. For more information visit the Alberta Farm Safety Program website at [agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety](http://agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety). 

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