

Safety in Agriculture

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According to the National Safety Council, agriculture is the most hazardous industry in the United States. You can prevent injuries on farms by establishing a safe operation. This is accomplished by performing a hazard assessment. The hazard assessment means to search out and eliminate or reduce the hazards on your farm. Where a hazard cannot be eliminated, safe work behaviors to avoid hazards are a secondary method of preventing injuries. Safety training for all workers on a farm, including family members, is also very important.

Safety and Health Hazards - Depending upon the crops, animals and specific farming activities, safety and health hazards will vary greatly from farm to farm. The following is a general listing of hazards or hazardous areas that may occur on a farm:

Chemicals / pesticides	Highway traffic	Ponds
Cold / heat / sun	Lifting	Silos
Dust	Livestock handling	Slips / trips
Electricity	Machinery / equipment	Toxic gases
Falls	Manure pits	Tractors
Grain bins	Mud	Wells
Hand tools	Noise	Confined spaces

There may be hazards on your farm that are not listed here. You should obtain information about all of the hazards that exist on your farm, so you can work to minimize or eliminate them.

Tractors / Farm Machinery - Tractors are the most commonly used machines on farms, and are involved in more fatal injuries than any other injury cause. Tractor roll over is the most common form of fatal farm injury. To prevent this type of injury, a Rollover Protection Structure (ROPS) should be on every tractor. Other farm machinery can present many hazards to farm workers. Entanglement in moving parts of machinery is the primary hazard and cause of injury.

Animals – Working around large farm animals can cause many injures on dairy and livestock farms. Bulls, stallions, and boars can all seriously injure workers. New mothers, such as cows or sows, will defend their young. Any animal being handled can easily pin a handler against a wall or fence.

Storage Structures - Storage structures such as grain bins and silos have serious hazards that can lead to death. Many of these structures fall under the Confined Space regulations. Confined spaces have an entire set of rules and conditions to work in and around them safely. Stored or crusted grain in a silo for instance, can flow and lead to entrapment and suffocation. In silos, gas can form, which is made up primarily of nitrogen dioxide and this gas will severely burn lung tissues and may also displace the oxygen, leading to suffocation.

Chemicals/Pesticides - Many different chemicals may be used on a farm. It is important to obtain the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), which will outline the health hazards and appropriate precautions to take to work with the chemical safely. Chemical exposure can occur through

inhalation, skin contact, and eye contact. Proper storage, handling, use, and disposal of chemicals minimizes the potential exposure to animals, feed, children, groundwater and farm workers.

Child Safety on Farms - An estimated 225 children die each year from injuries related to farm work. Children should be given age appropriate tasks, suitable to their mental and physical abilities. Children should not be allowed access to hazardous areas, and dangerous areas should be fenced off.

For more information visit the website maintained by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/> . There are many more hazards on farms than could be listed here. If you are unsure of how to address a safety issue, discuss your situation with the local agricultural agency.