

# Safety on the Farm . . .

### General Safety

When you make a mistake on the farm, most often you can learn from it and make corrections so it doesn't happen again. Following these general safety guidelines can help you prevent accidents and keep you and your loved ones safe.

#### Power Take Off

The Power Take-Off, or PTO shaft, is an efficient means of transferring mechanical power between farm tractors and implements. This power transfer system helped revolutionize North American agriculture during the 1930s and its clever technology is still being widely used on farms today. But it is also one of the oldest and most persistent hazards associated with farm machinery.

#### Be Aware of PTO Danger

It is important to understand that the PTO is one of the most dangerous pieces of equipment on the farm.

#### Never Reach Across Operating PTO

Note the rotating part of the PTO. Even if it is shielded, workers should never reach across it or step across it. This could result in severe injury or even death.

#### Keep Clothes and Limbs Away From Rotating PTO Shafts

Even if you are careful to keep your body away from a rotating PTO, if a loose sleeve or shirt tail gets caught, you will be pulled in with it.

#### Always Disengage the PTO

Always disengage the PTO, turn off the engine, and remove the keys before leaving the tractor seat.

#### Roll Over Protection

Even with modern farm equipment's advanced safety designs, roll-overs still take a deadly toll year after year. So many farms are still utilizing old equipment that has not been outfitted with rollover protection. It is an accident waiting to happen.

#### Retrofit ROPS Units

ROPS retrofit kits are available for older tractors, but not enough farmers have installed them. Unless retro fit ROPS units and seatbelts are installed on old tractors the driver is unprotected on a rollover. If an unprotected vehicle rolls over, an accident resulting in a serious injury or death is very likely.

#### Why Farmers Need to Install ROPS

Some farmers are reluctant to add ROPS to an old tractor because they don't want to see a new structure added to an old classic vehicle. Another reason is the cost for the roll bar and seatbelt is twice the value of the tractor that needs it. Farmers who question the expense of adding a ROPS unit to an old tractor need to ask themselves, what is their life, or the life of an employee or family member worth? The number of injuries and deaths due to rollovers are far too numerous to ignore.

#### The Importance of Seatbelts

A key component of ROPS is the seatbelt. Even in a modern vehicle with ROPS built in, you are only properly protected if you are wearing your seatbelt. Be aware, the greatest number of roll-over accidents occurs on the small utility tractors compared to the large field tractors. You still need to wear your seatbelt. The cab on a newer large field tractor is a rigid structure and is rated as roll-over-protected. In an accident, however, you might be tossed about, or possibly thrown through the window unless you are buckled up.

#### ATVs

ATVs are commonly used to inspect crops and livestock; to inspect and repair irrigation systems and fence lines; to supervise field crews; to herd livestock and a variety of other jobs on the farm. It's very important that anyone who uses an ATV on your farm follows basic ATV safety procedures and precautions.

#### ATVs Are Not Toys

Manufacturers suggest children under the age of 12 should not operate ATVs with an engine size over 70 cc. Children under the age of 16 years often lack the emotional maturity and physical size to operate or control most machines. They should not operate adult-sized ATVs or those with an engine greater than 90 cc.

#### Never Carry A Passenger

The unique handling characteristics of an ATV require that the operator shift both weight and position on the seat to steer and control the vehicle. Extra riders hamper the operator's

ability to steer and control the ATV.

#### Use Lights, Reflectors and Flags

Since ATVs are small and low to the ground, they are not as visible as larger vehicles. Lights, reflectors, and highly visible flags should be used to help increase visibility.

#### Wear A Helmet

Even if you're driving on a farm and not in traffic, a spill can result in serious head trauma if the rider is not wearing a helmet.

#### Avoid Paved Surfaces

Riding on paved surfaces can seriously affect the handling and control of the vehicle, and may cause a sudden loss of control. If you must drive on pavement, turn gradually and go slowly. An ATV is not intended for public road usage.

#### Drive Smart

Never operate at excessive speeds for the terrain, visibility, or beyond your experience level. Never do wheelies, jumps or stunts. Do not drive while under the influence of anything that might impair your driving abilities, such as alcohol, drugs or fatigue.

#### Grain Bins & Augers

Grain handling in bins can become routine and when a worker is in a hurry an accident can happen. Sadly, year after year, people who enter grain bins are trapped and engulfed in grain resulting in suffocation. The number of grain bin fatalities can be greatly reduced if farmers and their workers get proper training and follow grain bin safety procedures.

#### Be Aware of Conditions For Entrapments

Entering a grain bin after a portion of the grain has been removed can be a very hazardous situation. Grain entrapment is often caused by grain that goes out of condition resulting in clumping, cones, pyramids, bridging and other problems with bin unloading. When this happens people often enter the bins because the grain is not flowing smoothly through the system. People in bins may also get pulled under by flowing grain. This grain entrapment may cause suffocation and death.

#### Use of an Effective Lifeline System

Always use a harness and a properly anchored lifeline when entering a grain bin with a second person to observe and monitor the worker in the grain bin.

#### Keep Clear of Operating Augers

Due to the nature of their active moving components and the auger itself, it will always pose a threat of serious injury.

#### Lock-Out/Tag-Out

Always lock-out so machinery is turned off while you are working on it and tag-out any equipment before entering a grain bin. This will signal to others that you are in the bin. It's highly recommended that you seek out the information that the Grain Handling Coalition makes available at [www.grain-safety.org](http://www.grain-safety.org).

#### Livestock Handling

When you work on a farm, you need to be careful that bad habits don't creep in and make your routines dangerous. Outlined below are some good habits for you and your crew when handling livestock, whether it is pigs, sheep, goats or cattle.

#### Gentle Guidance

Cattle are animals with a herding instinct, which means they will follow the behavior and movement a dominant leader demonstrates. Cow pushers gently move them along without hitting or yelling at the cows. A simple hand on the back, or a nudge, is typically enough to get the animals to move.

#### Understanding How Cattle See

Cattle see the world differently from humans. They can see all around and only have a blind spot directly in back. Being able to see all around them means cattle can be distracted by motion off to their side. They also don't see as well down below them so a dark shadow can appear to be a deep hole. This is why cattle may balk at shadows or a piece of trash on the ground.

#### The Flight Zone

The flight zone is an animal's personal space or comfort zone. The flight zone for cattle may be 5 to 25 feet depending on how often they have been handled. The flight zone increases when the approach is from the head and also increases when they are excited. The flight zone decreases when the animals are

in a single file chute. Cattle will normally move more effectively if the handler stays to the edge of the flight zone. Getting too close, inside the flight zone, may cause an animal to panic. Handlers positioning themselves outside of the flight zone will allow animals to stop moving forward. Handlers positioning themselves inside the flight zone will cause the animal to move away from the handler.

#### Point of Balance

Chutes are often used to single out an animal for treatment or to direct them into an enclosed area. Point of balance is a place on the animal near their right shoulder. When you stand in front of it, they should back up. When you stand behind it, they should move forward.

#### Safety Around Bulls

Be careful, and never trust a bull. Always have an escape route planned when working in a pen with a bull.

#### Transporting Equipment

Each year accidents involving tractors and other farm machinery occur on public roads, causing death and injury to those involved, as well as substantial costs in damage to expensive farm equipment. It's very important to be aware of basic safety procedures and precautions to follow when transporting farm equipment on rural roads.

#### Driving Farm Vehicles on Rural Roads

Navigating rural roads with a wide load of farm equipment can sometimes be dangerous. Roads are often very narrow; lanes aren't always marked and are usually poorly lit. Farm equipment operators need to be sure that the SMV symbol is prominently displayed on slow moving vehicles and can be easily seen. It is also extremely important that your vehicle is equipped with proper rear view mirrors that can see behind and around your wide vehicle, or the machine in tow. One of the most common road accidents that occur with farm vehicles is when the driver makes a left hand turn and cannot see a vehicle attempting to pass.

#### Loading and Transporting Equipment

Before loading or unloading a vehicle, be sure you're on a flat surface. Never attempt to load a vehicle parked on a slope. Take the key out of the vehicle and set the parking brake. Before loading the trailer, make sure you have connected it properly to the truck by checking the fifth wheel latch, or goose neck latch, and seeing that the safety chains are connected safely to the truck. Be sure that the breakaway cable is connected directly to the truck and directly to the trailer so that it will disconnect and lock the brakes in case of a separation. Make sure that the vehicle is level and that the last axle is chocked, on the front and back, to prevent a roll away.

#### Handling Chemicals

It is fairly common to find many different chemicals and pesticides in use on a modern farm. So common, it's easy to take them for granted. And taking them for granted can lead to carelessness. Here are some good practices for safe use of chemicals and pesticides on the farm.

#### Get Training

When working around chemicals and pesticides it is best to be properly trained to insure your safety. There are chemical and

pesticide courses available and should be taken if you are working directly with the application or handling of chemicals and pesticides. Your state may require training and certification to lawfully do this type of work.

#### Read Material Safety Data Sheets

Before using any chemicals, read through the materials safety data sheet to learn more about how to properly handle that particular chemical, what to do in case of emergency and how to minimize health risks from exposure. Understand safety and warning symbols.

#### Wear Protective Equipment

Make sure you and your workers wear, use and maintain protective equipment. When handling chemicals, it is important to always wear protective gloves. You will also have to use a respirator and eye protection when working with some chemicals.

#### How Chemicals Get Into Your Body

Chemicals can enter the body in four ways: Transdermal (through the skin), Inhalation (through breathing), Ocular (through the eyes), or Ingestion (through swallowing).

#### Store Chemicals Carefully

Always keep the chemical storage area locked and separate from where animals are housed and out of the reach of children.

#### Wash Up After Handling Chemicals

Always wash hands after using or storing chemicals to avoid transferring chemicals into the body from eating, smoking and using the bathroom. If any chemicals slosh or spill on clothing while working, shower and change clothes right away to avoid absorbing dangerous chemicals into your body.

#### Electrical Safety

When you make a mistake on the farm, most often you can learn from it and make corrections so it doesn't happen again. But when you make a dangerous electrical mistake, you may never get a second chance. It is important to always respect energy and the danger it can pose on the farm.

#### How to Avoid Electrical Accidents

Be aware that when you are hurrying and don't pay attention to your surroundings, you are more likely not to notice potential electrical hazards. Make sure you know how to shut off the power everywhere on the farm.

Always look up for overhead power lines whenever you are moving tall equipment keeping at least 10 feet away. Current can jump or arc across and make contact with equipment. Call 811, a national number, to bring in professional locators to mark underground lines before you dig or do construction.

If a wire is hanging low or has fallen on the ground, you cannot tell whether it is live or not. For safety's sake, treat every wire as if it is energized. When using extension cords, make sure to plug into a GFI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter), particularly when using an extension cord in a wet environment or outdoors. Keep all power tools, motors, cords and other electrical equipment in good repair.

If you need to turn power off, make sure you tag the fuse or breaker switch to make others aware that you are working.

#### What to do In Case of an Electrical Accident

If a person comes in contact with an energized wire, they will become part of the pathway to the ground. It is very important that you do not touch that person until the power is off. Call 911 and then assist the victim. Administer CPR if they are not breathing.

If you are in a vehicle that has become entangled with live electrical wire, stay in the vehicle. Call for help and tell others to stay away from the vehicle. Call 911 and the power company. If the vehicle has caught fire, jump clear of the vehicle, making sure you land on two feet. Shuffle away on two feet, always keeping both feet on the ground at the same time, to avoid electrocution.

#### Behavioral Hazards & Child Safety

Even though you've gone to great lengths to see that your farm is as safe a work environment as you can make it, care-

less and unsafe behavioral habits can undermine even the best efforts. Here are some tips on how to avoid some of the most common behavior safety risks.

#### Child Safety

Certain situations and objects on the farm that appear fun to a child can put them at risk of serious injury:

- Never allow children to enter a farm building alone
- Lock silos and bins
- Make fixed ladders inaccessible
- Store portable ladders out of a child's reach
- Fence farm ponds and manure pits
- Cap abandoned wells
- Place unused dual tires flat on the ground
- Don't allow children to play on idle equipment
- Don't allow children to ride in or on any farm vehicles

#### Preventing Falls

Falls can cause serious injuries even from waist height. Always use a three-point hold when entering or exiting a vehicle. Attach extra grab rails on trucks, tractors, headers, ramps and steps. If you have to work in high situations, wear a safety harness and well-fitted boots with non-slip soles. Remember, it's much easier to prevent a fall than to recover from one.

#### Cell Phones / Alcohol / Drugs

Paying complete attention to the job at hand is the smartest way to stay safe. So while doing farm work, stay off the phone. This is a very dangerous distraction causing more and more serious farm accidents every year. Never operate farm equipment or vehicles while under the influence of alcohol, or on prescription or over the counter medications that impair your judgment or reflexes.

#### Fatigue

And lastly, but most important, the most hazardous behavior to try and avoid while working on the farm is fatigue. Being overly tired can cancel out all other cautions by becoming too weary to follow good practices, or too tired to pay attention enough to spot potential dangers. Don't be in a hurry. Rushing a job is a short cut to an accident.



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