

# Farm Safety Check: Preventing Building Fires

Fires pose serious threats to the wellbeing of livestock and humans. Farms have many flammable materials, such as pesticides, cobwebs, dust, bedding, hay, straw, paint, fertilizer, and paper.

In the winter, additional threats to safety include the physical distance from farms to the closest fire station, poor road conditions, windy conditions that can intensify the fire, heating equipment, rodent bedding, and damaged wires and cords. Given these farm hazards, prevention is key.

Take a moment today to save a life tomorrow.

Copies of the form can be downloaded at: <http://umash.umn.edu/umash-farm-safety-check/>

### SAFETY CHECKLIST

Are flammable and combustible liquids in labeled containers (Underwriters Laboratories or Factory Mutual approved cans for gasoline)? Note the quantity, date purchased, and type of liquid. These should be placed in appropriate safety cabinets with a warning sign.

- Are flammable materials kept away from machinery, heating sources, and electrical equipment?



- Do you check the internal temperature of hay bales daily? Bales should be in groups of 10 or fewer, at least 100 feet away from structures, and with a fire break of at least 30 feet between the groups.
- Are used oil rags stored in a properly sealed container and away from heat sources?
- Do you refuel outside and when machinery has cooled?
- Do you immediately clean up spilled flammable liquids?
- Are engines lubricated and exhaust systems properly maintained to prevent sparking and backfiring?
- Is wiring free of damage and unexposed? Repair bent plugs and frayed cords. Wrap wires in corrosion-resistant metal conduit pipes.
- Are extension cords rated for outdoor use and used for only temporary purposes?
- Do you unplug appliances not in use?

- Are up-to-date class ABC fire extinguishers in every building?
- Are electrical outlets, electrical panels, fans, and lights clean and free of debris?
- Does everyone regularly practice fire drills, including how to use a fire extinguisher?
- Are there at least

two marked exits in each building, a fire hose and bucket, and cleared pathways? Is good ventilation maintained?

- Have workers received proper training for emergencies? Are regular fire drills conducted?
- Is the yard clear of debris so fire apparatus can fit down the driveway and set up? A driveway width of 12 – 14 feet is preferred.
- Have you invited your local fire department out to your farm for a virtual fire safety “tour”?
- Is smoking restricted to designated areas only?
- Are there fully functioning smoke detectors and/or sprinklers located inside livestock buildings and buildings with flammable material?
- Are heat lamps securely placed, clean, and in good repair?
- Is a properly maintained rodent control program in place?

# Just Doing Routine Maintenance Around Town



Two diligent, and now famous, workers from Jet-Way Multiple Services, Inc. out of Harwood, ND, spent some quality time in Rothsay last week cleaning out the city sewers. There wasn’t an emergency or end-of-summer situation that required their expertise. The City of Rothsay is making sure the systems are receiving their annual cleanse to keep the town in tiptop shape.

# Askegaard Organic Farm Is Ag Water Quality Certified



Brian Ingmire (MAWQCP Certification Specialist), right, gives Mark Askegaard and Beth McConnon their certification sign.

Mark Askegaard and his daughter, Beth McConnon, have recently become another pair of certified stewards of water quality through the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). The program, which originated in 2014, is a voluntary process that certifies farming operations utilizing conservation-minded practices to protect water quality throughout Minnesota for a duration of 10 years. Their operation, Askegaard Organic Farm, now accompanies over 1,300 producers in Minnesota farming more than 950,000 certified acres within the program.

The sixth generation family farm achieved certification for their tracts of land in both Clay and Wilkin counties in July of 2023, where they have also been certified organic for the past 26 years.

“Having the MAWQCP certification is important to our family and farming operation because we want to leave our land better than we found it for the next generation,” Askegaard said. “Thus, anything we can do to help protect our environment, is of interest to our farm.”

The nearly 1,000-acre farming operation entails a 5-year rotation of crops consisting of wheat, soybeans, flax, oats, and a green fallow – or cover crop – season. A cover crop can be defined as any non-cash crop

grown to the primary cash crop. These crops have the potential to increase soil organic matter, reduce erosion, improve soil structure, and promote water infiltration. Askegaard Organic Farm also commits a portion of their time and efforts to milling and packaging their flaxseed harvest onsite, where it is then retailed for the consumer market. Overall, the extensive operation enables Askegaard and McConnon to not have to apply commercial fertilizer, animal manure, or pesticides of any kind.

“In the future, we would like to try incorporating a larger variety of cover crops and winter forages into our rotation,” Askegaard said. “And also reduce our tillage.”

This comes in relation of Askegaard and McConnon deciding to eschew OMRI certified products in favor of managing future nutrients and pests using diversity upon their farm, seeding more covers, and practicing minimal tillage – a big step forward in management practices to better ensure the protection of water quality and reduces erosion.

“Good farming practices play a vital role in protecting our natural resources,” Askegaard said. “Which is why the MAWQCP is so important in raising awareness on the importance of having clean water and a healthy ecosystem.”

For more information about the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, contact the East Ottertail Soil and Water Conservation Office at 218-346-9105 or visit their website: [www.eotswcd.org](http://www.eotswcd.org).

## Apply To Master Gardener Program Through Oct. 1

The application period to become a University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener volunteer is open through Oct. 1.

Extension Master Gardeners bring science-based horticulture knowledge and practices to Minnesota, promoting healthy landscapes and building communities through volunteer efforts.

“Our understanding of the benefits of gardening is expanding to include personal and community wellbeing, pollinator health, the importance of climate resilient landscapes and more. Becoming a Master Gardener volunteer is a great way to invest time and energy in local activities and efforts that support healthy people and a healthy planet,” said Tim Kenny, statewide director, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Master Gardeners are respected as reliable sources of gardening information for Minnesotans. What many don’t know is that becoming a Master Gardener gives volunteers a chance to

expand their interests in areas including sustainability, local foods, pollinators and climate change. Master Gardeners also put their skills to work conserving green spaces, native plants and clean water.

The University of Minnesota has trained thousands of Master Gardeners; each year, they contribute more than 140,000 hours of service in Minnesota communities.

This year, the training will be all online and spread out over 14 weeks, making the program more student-friendly than ever. To become a Master Gardener, individuals commit to complete online training and 50 hours of volunteering in the first year. After the first year, they commit 25 hours to annual volunteer work; many choose to devote more time to the program.

Master Gardeners come from all ages and backgrounds. To learn more about the program and apply, visit [z.umn.edu/MG\\_info](http://z.umn.edu/MG_info) or call 612-625-9864.



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## NOTICE OF SCHOOL ELECTION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the School Election of Independent School District No. 850 of Wilkin County, State of Minnesota, will be held on

**Tuesday the 7th day of November 2023,**

at which the polls will be open from 4 o’clock P.M. to 8 o’clock P.M., in the Rothsay Public School media center.

That at said Election the following matters will be voted upon:

The election of three members of the School Board for the term of four years to succeed:

Justin Phillips  
Kevin Brenden  
David Simmer

for which offices five applications have been filed by or in behalf of candidates as follows:

Kyle Blanchard  
Danielle Grunewald  
Stephanie Olson  
Justin Phillips  
David Simmer

/s/ Tulsa Kugler

Election Clerk of Independent School District No. 850

Dated: 8/28/2023