

Extension Responds: Stress and Safety

Inspect Your Farm for Hazards and Take Corrective Action

By Mark Purschwitz

Trying to be careful or to work safely is only a small part of preventing injuries on the farm. Identifying hazards and either removing them or guarding against them is much more effective.

As a farm operator, you should conduct an all-farm inspection at least once a year. Ask other family members or employees help with the inspection, since they may see things you overlooked. Here are some of the most important areas to inspect:

Machinery

Review your operator's manual to see what safety equipment was installed on your machine. Check to make sure guards and shields are in place – they are critical to your safety. You should have highly visible lighting and marking on any machines you drive on public roads to protect yourself and other motorists. Your machines must be in good condition, with good tires, brakes and other safety equipment. If you have tractors without ROPS (Rollover Protective Structures), consider a retrofit. It is good life insurance.

Farmstead

Take a slow and observant walk around the entire farmstead. Examine all buildings and other structures inside and out. Look around the barnyard, the driveway and any other places where you or others, including children or visitors, might be exposed to hazards. Look at the condition and cleanliness of steps, walkways, ladders, and anything else that could cause you or someone else to slip or fall. Good general housekeeping is important and sets the overall tone for a safe and orderly operation.

Electrical wiring

Inadequate or damaged wiring can cause fires, electrocutions and many other serious problems.

Storage areas

Make sure chemical storage buildings and manure storage facilities have warning signs and doors, fences or other barriers to keep children and unauthorized people out. Push-off ramps for scraping manure into pits should have barriers strong enough to keep the scraping machine from sliding over the

edge. The barrier should be high enough off the ground so you can scrape manure under it into the storage facility.

Animals

If you have bulls, post warning signs. Visitors may not expect to encounter bulls, and you could be liable in case of an attack. You should also have human pass-through (two heavy pipes or sturdy posts 14-18" apart that allow a person to run through but prevent a bull from following) as well as strong gates, fences and handling equipment.

Emergency response

Place fire extinguishers in areas where they could be needed. Post phone numbers for the fire department and emergency medical services near every telephone. Also post verbal directions for finding your farm in case a visitor to the farm needs to make the emergency call for you. Teach everyone on the farm how to use a fire extinguisher and who to call for help if it is needed. A least one person on the farm should be trained in basic first aid. Talk with your local fire fighters and EMTs about your farm and how they can best respond to an emergency.

Your safety, as well as that of your family, employees, and visitors, depends on identifying and controlling hazards. Contact your county Extension office and obtain bulletin A3619, "Farm Hazard Inspection Checklist", to help guide your inspection.

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