THINK SAFETY FARM SAFELY
Message from IFA

The Think Safety and Farm Safely campaign aims to encourage farmers and their families to maintain the highest safety standards on their farms and thereby reduce the number of injuries and deaths.

Improved farm safety starts with identifying the hazards and putting in place practical measures to minimise the risk. Be especially alert to risks that may affect children and older people.

Farms are a place of work and, for most of us, also our home - Think Safety and Farm Safely, every hour of every day.

IFA President.

Introduction

A farm can be a dangerous place with powerful tractors and machinery, livestock, slurry pits and many other hazards capable of posing a risk, especially to children. The best way to protect you, your family and anyone working or visiting the farm is to:

- Carry out a risk assessment to identify the hazards, potential risks and appropriate control measures.
- Eliminate or reduce the risks by implementing the control measures.

The main causes of serious accidents and fatalities on farms are tractors and machinery, livestock, tree felling, falls from heights and slurry hazards. Most accidents are preventable if practical farm safety measures are taken.

A third of workplace deaths in Ireland take place in the agricultural sector. As well as fatalities, approximately 1,800 accidents occur on farms annually, many of which cause serious injuries and disabilities to farmers.
Prepare a Safety Statement

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires that all farmers complete a Safety Statement. Farmers with 3 or less employees can comply with the requirement by adhering to the Farm Safety Code of Practice, completing the Farm Safety Risk Assessment and implementing the appropriate control measures. It is essential that farmers ensure that these safety standards are maintained.

An easy to use online Risk Assessment document can be completed at farmsafety.com. For more information or advice on completing a Risk Assessment document visit any of the following websites: IFA.ie, FBD.ie or HSA.ie.

Training on completing the Farm Safety Risk Assessment is also available from Teagasc and from many members of the Agricultural Consultants Association.
Tractors, Machinery & Vehicles
Most serious farm accidents involve tractors and machinery. Inexperienced operators, human error, speed, lack of concentration, unguarded parts (especially the PTO shaft) and poor mechanical condition predominantly cause accidents involving tractors and machinery. To ensure your safety and the safety of others it is vital that you:

• Keep all tractors, machinery and vehicles in proper working order, especially safety features.
• Plan and prepare for all work with machinery. Always allow adequate time for the job.
• Drive at a safe speed, excessive speed kills.
• Only allow competent trained persons to operate tractors and machinery.
• Ensure loads on trailers are properly secured.
• Do not allow anyone to ride on towed equipment.
• Ensure that tractors driven on the road have a good braking system and tyres, as well as adequate mirrors, lights, wipers and indicating system.
• Ensure machinery and guards are maintained in good condition and that guards are replaced after maintenance work.
• Turn off machine at power source, remove keys and ensure stored power is released before attempting to free blockages.
• Keep cab tidy so that nothing can get caught under the pedals or in any of the levers.

Safety with Livestock
Many farm accidents involve livestock and these accidents mainly occur while carrying out routine tasks such as herding, handling, loading and testing of livestock. The majority of fatalities involving livestock are caused by an attack by a bull. Livestock that is not handled often such as suckler herds, cows with calf at foot or cows at calving time are particularly dangerous. To ensure your safety when handling livestock it is essential that you:

• Keep the temperament of animals, particularly bulls, under constant review.
• Never turn your back on a bull.
• Ensure bulls are fitted with nose ring and trailing chain.
• Only let experienced people handle a bull.
• Never go into an enclosed area with a bull.
• Always have an escape route when handling livestock.
• Ensure that livestock handling, housing and loading facilities are safe and easy to use.
• Have good calving facilities that protect you from cow attacks.

Child Safety
The farm is not a playground and it is potentially a very dangerous place for children that do not fully understand the hazards. Over half of child fatalities are as a result of a child falling from or being crushed by a tractor or machinery. Almost a third are as a result of a
child drowning in slurry or water. Every farmer should have a safe and secure play area for children. The following practical measures should be implemented to ensure the safety of children on farms:

- Never allow a child in a farmyard unless supervised by an adult.
- Make children aware of the dangers on the farm and set some ground rules.
- Ensure that unattended tractors are locked, keys removed and their implements lowered to the ground.
- Ensure all moving parts of machinery are adequately guarded.
- Never allow a child under 14 to operate tractors or self propelled equipment. A young person must be 14 years old to operate a tractor on the farm. They must be over 16 years, trained and supervised to operate a tractor on a public road.
- Prevent access to areas where there is a risk of drowning or suffocation by ensuring that all slurry facilities, wells, tanks, lagoons etc. are securely covered or fenced.
- Prevent access to danger areas at heights and access to enclosed animal pens.
- Keep children away from animals, especially if they have young, as this makes the animals more protective and aggressive.

Safety of Older Farmers
Decreased mobility and reaction time are probably the biggest contributory factors to accidents among older farmers involving tractors, machinery and livestock. Other factors include strength, mobility and flexibility.

- Assess the work to be done.
- Know your limitations.
- Get competent help when handling livestock.
- Get specialists to carry out building maintenance.

Preventing Falls & Falling Objects
Many fatal and serious injuries result from falls from heights and from persons being struck by falling or moving objects, such as gates, building materials, bales etc. To help prevent these types of accidents occurring it is essential that you:

- Plan all work at height and ensure that the appropriate safety equipment and personal protection equipment (PPE) is used.
- Never walk on fragile, slippery or potentially unstable surfaces.
- Ensure that buildings are maintained in a good safe condition.
- Make sure that all goods and materials are stored in a secure and proper manner.
- Fit sliding doors or ensure that doors or gates are properly secured, as heavy swinging doors or gates are highly dangerous, especially in high winds.
Safety when handling Slurry
Handling slurry is a potentially dangerous activity. The main hazards associated with slurry are toxic slurry gas, slurry tank and lagoon openings and the slurry spreader PTO shaft.

- Remove all stock from the shed before agitation and ventilate the shed when agitating.
- Only agitate on windy days and agitate from outside the shed if possible.
- Ensure that the PTO shaft is securely guarded.
- Ensure all slurry tanks and lagoons are adequately fenced or covered.

Farm Forestry & Small Tree Felling
Forestry work is a high-risk activity and felling using a chainsaw is one of the most dangerous tasks carried-out on farms and in forests. There are many risks associated with chainsaw use such as lacerations, amputations, crush injuries, hearing damage and eye damage. Farmers should consider using a bushman or other saw to do the work. The main cause of fatal accidents is as a result of chainsaw operator being struck by a falling tree or branch. Farmers are at risk if they lack the experience, knowledge and training required for certain chainsaw operations, such as small tree felling in confined areas.

Chainsaw operators must ensure that they:

- Are competent to carry out the chainsaw operation.
- Wear suitable personal protective clothing and equipment when operating a chainsaw, this includes: safety helmet, safety glasses, ear defenders, boots with steel toecaps, gloves and chainsaw trousers.
- Only use chainsaws fitted with appropriate safety features such as a clearly marked on/off switch, a chain brake incorporating a front hand guard, a safety throttle, a chain catcher, a rear hand guard, a chain with low kickback characteristics, an anti-vibration system and an exhaust to direct fumes away from the operator.
- Avoid working alone when operating a chainsaw. If this is not possible, ensure someone knows where you are working and that you have procedures to raise the alarm if something goes wrong, for example, use of a mobile phone.
- Never use the chainsaw above shoulder height or when off balance.
- Create a safe work area; be aware of your surroundings and other people working in the forest.
Importance of Insurance

Serious accidents always lead to heartache and pain, but they can also cause financial problems. This is why it is important that you not only farm safely, but that you also ensure that you have adequate insurance in place to protect yourself from financial hardship and give yourself peace of mind.

FBD strongly recommend that all farmers ensure that they have adequate Personal Accident, Employers Liability and Public Liability cover in place.

Employers and Public Liability Insurance will provide you with cover for any legal liability you may have in relation to a claim arising from an accidental bodily injury or disease to an employee or third party which can be attributed to negligence in connection with the farm business.

Due to the fact that farmers are self employed they should consider Personal Accident cover. This cover will provide a “Weekly Benefit Payment” in the event of the insured not being able to work on their farm as a result of an accident. It will also provide a fixed lump sum benefit in the event of death or a serious injury. Personal Accident insurance covers you for bodily injury caused directly by accidental violent means, e.g. crash, machinery accident, falls, etc. This cover operates 24 hours per day and is not restricted to accidents occurring on the farm. The policy can be extended to cover injury sustained during sporting activities such as hurling and football.
The information contained in this leaflet is approved by the Health and Safety Authority. IFA gratefully acknowledges the use of photographs supplied by FBD. For more information on Farm Safety visit IFA.ie or contact your local IFA office.