

2.0 Managing safety and health on your farm

SAFETY and health, like any other aspect of farm management, needs active management. This greatly reduces the risk of injury and ill health.

2.1. Completing a farm-safety risk assessment or safety statement

THE Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 places a legal duty on all farmers to prepare and implement a safety statement. However, farmers with three or fewer employees may instead follow the guidance in this code and complete a risk assessment within this code of practice.

Preparing and implementing a safety statement or code-of-practice risk assessment in a comprehensive and effective manner has two main benefits:

- It is likely to reduce the risk of accidents and ill health on your farm.
- It may also reduce insurance costs or protect against any compensation claims. It would help to convince a judge that you, as an employer, had taken all reasonably practicable measures to ensure safety.

Who has access to a safety statement or risk assessment?

ALL people who work on your farm (including family members) must be made aware of the relevant contents of the safety statement or risk assessment. These must also be brought to the attention of any other people who need to be aware of the safety and health controls on the farm.

These include casual/relief workers, contractors and people supplying goods and services to the farm.

An inspector of the Health and Safety Authority may examine your safety statement or risk assessment. The inspector will also examine how the safety and health measures are being implemented on your farm. If the safety statement or risk assessment is found to be inadequate, the inspector can direct you to revise it within 30 days.

2.2. Preparing a safety statement or risk assessment for your farm

THE following are broad guidelines to help you complete the safety statement or risk assessment.

Step 1: Make a commitment to manage safety and health

Your commitment to complete the safety statement or risk assessment and implement it on an ongoing basis is an important step in preventing accidents and ill health. When you have carefully considered and completed all aspects of the document, sign it in the space provided.

Step 2: Carry out a risk assessment for your farm

The safety statement or risk assessment identifies the key farm hazards known to cause death, serious injury and ill health. Follow these directions for completing the documents:

- You will be familiar with many of the hazards. An accident or a number of near misses may have occurred on your farm in the past. Identify the hazards and prevent a reoccurrence.

- Walk around your farm and examine all aspects of it from a safety and health point of view. Consider work activities at different times of the year, since the workplace and work systems are likely to change from season to season. Include 'out-farms' and any other place of work over which you have control.
- Consider the work organisation of your farm. Work overload, rushing, poor machinery, poor farm maintenance, untidy farmyards and inadequate supervision are a major cause of accidents.
- Ignore trivial issues and concentrate on the significant hazards that could lead to harm.

Where your risk assessment shows that control measures are inadequate, answer 'x' on the risk-assessment document. Then list suitable control measures on the action list.

Step 3: Decide on prevention/control measures

When you are devising safety and health-control measures, consider them in the following order:

1. Elimination

Elimination means putting a control in place to remove the hazard.

For example, use Artificial Insemination (AI) instead of keeping a bull; demolish unstable structures; instead of handling hazardous chemicals, use an enclosed, automated system.

2. Reduction

If a hazard cannot be eliminated, the next best option is to reduce the danger as much as possible. For example, use contractors to spread slurry; use less dangerous chemicals; and reduce contact with livestock by improving cattle-handling facilities.

3. Provide information, training and supervision

Ensure that every person on your farm has all the information and skills necessary to secure safety and health.

Information can be provided verbally or in writing. Ensure that your family members, employees, contractors and service providers read and understand the contents of your safety statement or risk assessment. You can also provide information by putting up hazard-warning signs.

Training may be formal or informal. A person may undertake an appropriate safety and health course, or be shown the correct way of doing a job.

Supervision and co-operation: Make sure that everyone who works on your farm knows and accepts their role regarding safety and health. It is your responsibility to ensure that the controls are implemented. If safety and health measures are not being implemented, stop the work or activity and insist on controls being followed.

4. Provide and use personal protective equipment (PPE) or clothing

PPE should be used as a last resort, after all other ways of eliminating or controlling the hazard have been considered. PPE should meet a high standard and be maintained and stored correctly. Examples include earmuffs, eye goggles and veterinary gloves.

Step 4: Review and update your safety statement or risk assessment

Farming hazards change constantly. Work practices change; new equipment or chemicals may be introduced. Review your safety statement or risk assessment during the year, and revise it at least annually. Use the SSWP section of this code to carry out regular reviews of your risk assessment (see Appendix 3).