

3.0 Preventing injuries and ill health in agriculture

3.1. Overview

WORKERS in agriculture (family and non-family) suffer a high proportion of fatal workplace accidents in Ireland:

- 28% of all fatal workplace accidents occur in agriculture, even though just 6.5% of the workforce is employed in farming

The level of farm accidents is not decreasing. Similar accidents occur each year. This suggests that many farmers take risks rather than put things right. Research indicates that, in general, farmers' attitudes to safety only change after serious injury occurs.

The aim of this code is to change this behaviour and to offer practical solutions to prevent injury and ill health.

Information on fatal accidents in farming and forestry, and from the national surveys of farm safety and health, has been used to develop the guidance in this code. A review of fatal accidents in farming over 10 years (1996 to 2005) revealed the major causes of death and where solutions can be found (see statistics in Appendix 1).



Farm accidents and ill health can cause tragedy, pain and suffering to farm families and farm workers and jeopardise their livelihood.

3.2. The challenge of reducing levels of accidents

THE key to improving safety and health in farming is to put practical measures in place to prevent accidents and ill health.

Farmers, along with their families and employees, must make safety and health their priority. This is the only way to reduce the amount of pain, suffering, disability and loss caused by farm accidents and ill health.

To manage farm safety and health effectively, do the following:

3.3. Prepare a safety statement or risk assessment

FARMERS are legally obliged to prepare and work to a safety statement based on risk assessment. However, farms where three or fewer workers are employed may follow the risk assessment and guidance material in this code, instead of writing a safety statement.

Once you have completed a risk assessment or safety statement, make sure you put the controls in place and maintain good standards of safety and health. Never take short-cuts or chances with your life, your family and your livelihood.

To keep your risk assessment up to date, an easy-to-use safe system of work plan sheet (SSWP) is available (see Appendix 3). It can be used to plan hazardous work or review your risk assessment on a quarterly or yearly basis.

3.4. Assess the work organisation of your farm

WORK organisation is an important issue of farm management and is strongly related to safety and health management. Rushing, taking short-cuts, poor preparation and poor maintenance are the root causes of many accidents. Skilled labour is now scarce and expensive, and off-farm employment among farm family members is increasing.

Research shows there is room to improve the effectiveness of labour use on many farms. Options include: changing work practices; modifying buildings and facilities; changing farming systems; and using a contractor.

Having adequate time for farm management will result in a well organised farm. This in turn will lead to improved safety and health standards. Having a satisfactory work/life balance allows adequate time for work, rest and leisure. This is crucial for long-term contentment and health.

3.5. Farm Safety DVD

A DVD on managing farm safety and health, entitled “FARMSAFE - A guide to managing safety and health on your farm”, has been produced by the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee to the Health and Safety Authority, and is available from the Authority. The DVD complements the written information presented in this code of practice. You are advised to view the DVD and implement the terms of the code.



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