

FARM SAFETY GAZETTE

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NEW FORMAT! Read it, post it!



4 Operational Checkpoints to ensure a safe season

As a WSPS consultant specializing in agricultural operations for more than 25 years, Fred Young regularly shares his health and safety expertise with farmers. Who better to turn to for key advice on prepping your operations for a safe season?

Fred offers a series of tips on where best to focus your efforts, and what questions to ask.

1. Mobile equipment. Read the operators' manuals if you haven't already done so. They outline what to check, maintenance requirements, wheel torque specs, etc. Inspect tires for deep cuts, wear, or damaged wheel hubs, rims and bearings. Chain down equipment with split rims before any service. Training for tire removal is an essential part of the wheel removal process.

Check hoses and piping systems for wear at the hose hangers or where they are routed through a frame channel or hangers, or grouped or tied together. Ensure your equipment is road ready. Are headlights, flashers, beacons, direction indicators, and width markers functional? Do they clearly indicate the actual width/length of the implement? Use MTO-approved safety chains with rated hooks and keepers.

2. Stationary equipment. Check guarding and shielding on such equipment as grain augers, power take-off (PTO) and auger flightings, silage blowers, manure pumps, tub hay grinders, feed/grain conveyors, and manure handling systems. Include electrical controls and switches.

3. Building inspection. Check lighting, stairs, handrails, all ladders, barn doors, security doors, roof condition, foundation walls, beams, etc. Can covers over openings support the intended loads? Are guardrails in place around floor openings? Other priorities during your inspection:

- Silo integrity. Silos will fail if not properly maintained. When was the last time a qualified person inspected yours? Over time concrete silos will develop liquid acids that eat way at concrete. Staves may appear solid from the outside but could be less than half the required thickness. Emptying and inspecting a silo will ensure it doesn't fail during use.



ASK the expert!



Kristin Hoffman
WSPS Consultant

FEELING STRESSED OUT?

Q I feel stressed out during the entire growing season, and it's affecting my health. What can I do? — Joseph H.

You're not alone. A recent University of Guelph study found that 45% of Canadian farmers had high stress, 58% anxiety, and 35% depression.

Farmers face incredible pressure to produce quickly and efficiently. They often put in endless hours, work alone for long periods, and must deal with factors beyond their control, like weather and market conditions, pests, and disease. Major stressors like these can lead to debilitating anxiety and depression. Here are eight steps to help reduce stressors.

- 1 Do as much prep as you can now.** Avoid the unexpected. Make sure equipment is in good working order; repair and replace as needed. Order supplies. Can seed, fertilizer, fuel be ordered now? Review your workload. Assess tasks and time requirements. Are there ways to use your time more efficiently? Can you hire extra hands to take on some of the work?
- 2 Give yourself a break.** It can be a 24/7 role for a farmer, but no one can consistently run that long, that hard. Take breaks to give your body and mind a rest.
- 3 Accept that some things are beyond your control.** Bad weather is a good example. Stay calm and look at ways to minimize the impact.
- 4 Connect with others.** Isolation can fuel stress, anxiety and depression. Have contact with others every day. It's especially important to spend time with family.
- 5 Share how you are feeling.** Share what's good or bad about your day with someone you trust — a spouse, a fellow farmer who understands the challenges, or a professional.
- 6 Learn how to cope with stress.** Deep breathing, positive self-talk and meditation are effective ways to cope with stress. Check out community and online resources. WSPS offers e-courses, free downloads and more www.wsps.ca.
- 7 Get support.** If you feel overwhelmed, contact your family doctor to access professional help, or look for resources from the Canadian Mental Health Association www.cmha.ca and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health www.camh.ca.
- 8 Check out thinkmentalhealth.ca,** a website offering free information and resources.

Contact WSPS for more assistance on coping with stress.

- Fire hazards. Many conditions can cause fires — hay or straw build-up on engines, blocked filters, leaking oil lines, spilt oil or fuel, open pails of oil left in the shop during service welding. Check that fire extinguishers are at hand and charged.
- Chemicals, medicines, needles. Are they properly stored, secured and disposed of in the proper controlled manner?
- Personal protective equipment. Do workers have what they need to do their jobs safely, such as approved self-containing breathing apparatus, hearing protection, and chemical safety goggles and gloves?

4. Emergency preparedness. How do you let people know where you are? Does your cellphone function at all locations, even in low areas? Do you know your rural route address for all fields you work on? Can an ambulance reach you or would special equipment be required? What do you have on hand if access is an issue? Who has first aid training? Who else inspects the first aid kits? Ensure kits are replenished and accessible.

“The safety decisions you make today will create a stronger business and stronger employees,” says Fred.

Look for lots more online information, tips, and resources on these and other operational safety issues in the farm safety section of WSPS' website www.wsps.ca/farmsafety and WSPS' Small Business Centre www.wsps.ca/smallbusiness.

Farm Safety Updates

STOP THINK ACT VIDEOS AVAILABLE

In collaboration with the Esso commercial fuel resellers of Imperial Oil, WSPS and its network of rural volunteers are helping farmers, agriculture workers and farm families keep safe through a program called Stop Think Act (STA).

Using a self-questioning methodology, the program advises people to think carefully about how they are about to perform a task and stop if it cannot be done safely. It can be applied to all tasks and is suitable for both children and adults.

A series of Stop Think Act videos are now available. Visit the Farm Safety section of the WSPS website www.wsps.ca/farmsafety.

Preparing to Train Your Employees for the New Season

“There's no better time than now to look at your training, and how you can make it better,” says WSPS Consultant Alyson Smith. “We really need to make sure we are teaching all of our employees how to use equipment and follow processes safely”

As you gear up for the next growing season, watch out for “dangerous” assumptions, says Alyson. For instance, don't assume returning workers will remember their previous safety training, or a new hire with farming experience will know how to operate your equipment.

Here are six ideas from Alyson to get you started now and save time later.



1. Build “Stop Think Act” into all your training so that people integrate this approach into everything they do

- Stop long enough to think about what you're about to do
- Think about how you're going to do it. Is it the best way? Is there a way to do it better?
- Act in the best way possible.

2. Create an orientation training checklist

“Include all the information you want covered in the training so that employees hired in June get the same training as the employees hired in April,” says Alyson. Add a copy of the checklist to employee files, and have employees sign off on training so you can record who's done what, and when. Tip: start with the safety checklist in WSPS' online Small Business Centre. Check out other resources while you're there. www.wsps.ca/SmallBusiness

3. Support different learning styles

“Include elements that will appeal to verbal learners (reading), visual learners (charts, graphics), audio learners (recite out loud) and hands-on learners to ensure they absorb what you are teaching.” The bonus: “with a variety of teaching tools, you're more likely to keep everyone's attention and keep them motivated.”

Is your HEALTH & SAFETY program up to speed?

A health and safety program is your plan of action to prevent injury and disease. At the core of the program are policies and procedures setting out your commitment to health and safety, outlining what's expected of everyone who works in the operation, and how to perform tasks safely.

What's the status of your program? Now's the time to bring it up to date and address any outstanding items, says Dean Anderson, WSPS' Strategic Advisor, Agriculture Initiatives.

Your program may have many components, depending on the scope and scale of your operation. Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* sets out program requirements that farming, horticulture and landscaping operations are required by law to meet. “If the act doesn't apply to your operation, then consider the requirements as best practices for preventing injuries and fatalities,” says Dean.

Here's a sampling of activities to ensure your health and safety program is firing on all cylinders when you need it most.

- **Do you have policies and procedures in place?** Does everyone know where they are and what they contain? Have you updated them to reflect changes since you created them (e.g., new violence and harassment prevention provisions implemented in 2016)?

4. Schedule regular refresher training

Plot a schedule for delivering short, frequent training on seasonal and task-oriented hazards. For example, operating equipment safely on slopes and muddy terrain, and protecting yourself from heat stress. Keep records, including employee sign-off, information discussed and dates.

5. Organize a series of toolbox or tailgate talks

Short talks delivered onsite are an easy way to complement more formal training. Figure out now what your key messages are and what props you'll need. Create a form for recording the topic, date and who was there. “This is a great way to ensure everyone starts their day thinking about safety,” says Alyson. Tip: check out Landscape Ontario's Workplace Safety Tailgate Talks for the Landscaping Industry. www.wsps.ca/farmsafety

6. Test for understanding

“Don't assume workers understand what you're teaching them. Prepare simple comprehension tests now — true or false, or quick answer — for delivery at the end of training sessions.” This is especially important for workers with a different first language.

RESOURCES

- WSPS consultants like Alyson can bring fresh perspectives, ideas and strategies to your training program. Speak to a consultant today: **1 877 494 WSPS (9777)**.
- Make your training program the best it can be with WSPS' online training resources, including orientation and awareness training, e-courses, free downloads, and more. www.wsps.ca/farmsafety

Overcome language issues with **Agricultural Safety Tools in English and Spanish**, on USB. Among the tools: 46 safety handouts, an orientation training program, and 16 hazard-specific tailgate talks. www.wsps.ca/farmsafety

- **Are mandatory postings up to date**, such as the WSIB “in case of injury” poster (Form 82),* a list of certified first aiders, the Ministry of Labour prevention poster,** the green book (Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*), and a contact list for your certified first aiders? These postings are a starting point for creating a health and safety culture. They instantly convey that health and safety is important, and can begin changing the mindset of everyone in your operation.
- **Are first aid certificates current?** They expire after three years. “I recommend on family farms that everyone have a valid first aid certificate,” says Dean. “You have to look after each other, and everyone needs to know how to look after themselves if they're working alone. Would you be able to stop yourself from bleeding?”
- **Does your emergency response plan reflect possible emergencies and operating conditions?** “For instance,” says Dean, “if an emergency occurs, do you have procedures for responding to it? If people have to evacuate, does your plan designate a meeting place? Is the emergency response contact information up to date?”

NEXT STEPS

Prioritize what you need to do, inform yourself, and look for tools and resources that can help you achieve your goal quickly and effectively.

WSPS has extensive online resources for small business in general, as well as farming, horticulture and landscaping operations in particular. These resources include downloadable guidelines, forms, fact sheets, safety topics, templates, and a *Farm Safety Starter Kit* — the foundation for a health and safety program. Visit the farm safety section of the WSPS website www.wsps.ca/farmsafety to access these resources.

* Find a downloadable version on the WSIB website (www.wsib.on.ca). In the search field, key in “Form 82”

** Download or order “Health & Safety at Work: Prevention Starts Here” from the Ontario Ministry of Labour website (www.labour.gov.on.ca).

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

We welcome suggestions for article topics as well as feedback on the newsletter. To notify us of your suggestions, or to request to be added or removed from the Farm Safety Gazette circulation list, e-mail us at farmsafetyfeedback@wsps.ca.