AGSAFE ALBERTA AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH FARM SAFETY PLANNING

By AgSafe Alberta

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When it comes to farm safety, many farmers operate under the guise that "it will never happen to me."

But statistics show that it very well could. In 2019, there were 20,405 injuries on farms in Alberta alone. Considering that, according to the 2016 census, there were 40,638 farms in Alberta, that number is pretty high.

We also know that stress significantly increases the chance of farm accidents, and right now we are in one of the busiest and most intense periods for grain farms – harvest. It is also the season when the highest number of incidents are recorded on farms.

In light of this, we at AgSafe wanted to remind farmers of a few things.

First of all, it CAN happen to you, or your family or neighbour.

Second, there are many steps you can take to prevent farm accidents altogether – which is the best approach. We are here to help with this.

You can start taking steps toward prevention by taking safety seriously. Consider it a real operational threat to your farm – and your family - because it poses the same level of risks and potential losses as factors like weather and market access issues.

It's also critical to have a farm safety plan in place, to create awareness of the hazards on your operation and to know what to do if they occur.

Not sure how to put a farm safety plan in place? We are here to help with that. On our website you'll find a safety orientation program, which will provide you with an introduction to farm safety basics and give you some safety pointers for working in the agriculture industry. The comprehensive program will cover all the basics, including farm policies, safety role, hazard management, incident reporting, emergency response, training and more.

This January, we also launched the Alberta FarmSafe Plan, a suite of tools to help farmers and ranchers create health and safety management programs that are customized for their individual operations. These tools include a certification program for farms, a manual, a workbook, and online courses covering topics like PPE and WHMIS. Visit our website at https://www.agsafeab.ca/ to find these resources.

A farm safety plan isn't a one-time thing. It should grow and evolve just like your farm does and should be updated every year, at the least. Every season, ideally.

Your plan should take into account all the potential risks on your farm and ensure you and all your staff know what to do if they occur.

Third, we want you to know what to do in the case of a farm accident, because those first couple of seconds and minutes after an incident occurs can be critical. For emergencies, always call 911 first.

For other incidences, or after emergency services have been contacted, call our hotline for incident assistance (1-833-9AGSAFE – put this number into your phone now). This is a free and confidential service for farmers, and it is available to you 24/7.

Our AgSafe Alberta representatives can help you with any and all of your safety questions and help you determine whether your farm incident requires an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) response. If it does, we can walk you through stop work/use orders or demands issued by OHS.

We can also provide you with information on applicable reporting requirements and return-to-work programs for injured workers.

Basically, if you have any safety-related questions or concerns, we are here to help. Put that number in your phone now -- 1-833-9AGSAFE.

A lack of planning for farm safety is one of the greatest risks for farmers and ranchers these days. Treat it like any other risk and have a plan in place. And remember, we are always here to help.