

**Canadian
Agricultural
Safety Week
Mar. 11-17, 2009**

FACT SHEET #9

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE
21 Florence Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0W6
Tel: (613) 236-3633 Fax: (613) 236-5749 farmsafety@cfafca.ca

Do you have a farm safety plan?

Worker protection, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and technical feasibility are the three key considerations in the development of any safety program. Hazards exist in every workplace so strategies to protect workers are essential whether the worker is the owner-operator or an employee. The health and well being of both humans and the business depend on it.

“PPE only works if you use it!” is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on the use, fit and access of personal protective equipment (PPE) in agriculture. The yearlong campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), from March 11 to 17, 2009. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) deliver CASW in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

“You can’t take all the hazards out of agriculture. It’s just the nature of the work,” says Marcel Hacault, CASA Executive Director. “However we can certainly reduce many of the hazards with a little thought and preparation and by making safety a part of each and every job.”

In practice, there are only seven strategies available to reduce workplace hazards. These include: engineering controls; material substitution; process change; revised work practices; equipment change; administrative controls; and the use of personal protective equipment. A good safety plan considers the hazards, evaluates all possible control methods, integrates various approaches, and re-examines them frequently to ensure a safe work operation. It does these things by requiring that conscious decision-making, evaluation, and re-evaluation is done at various stages throughout the program.

“An easy way to remember your safety plan is to think S.A.F.E.” says Hacault. “It means See, Assess, Fix, Evaluate. If you do this S.A.F.E. thought process in all your work you will significantly reduce the hazards on your farm or ranch.”

All hazard controls can be put in two basic categories: pre-contact and point-of-contact. Pre-contact control is the first and most important method because it prevents the hazard from reaching the worker. These controls include substituting materials or processes that are less hazardous, isolating hazardous processes, retrofitting existing equipment, or acquiring safer equipment. Pre-contact control can also be achieved by providing protection to the worker with local exhaust ventilation, machine guarding, better housekeeping, and safe work practices. Many Canadian jurisdictions legislate pre-contact controls.

Where pre-contact controls are not practical, feasible, or totally effective then point-of-contact controls must be used. The point-of-contact control is important but secondary because it cannot eliminate the hazard. It only manages the hazard at the point of contact with the worker. This form of control is primarily accomplished through personal protective equipment. It is to be used when pre-contact controls are not totally effective. Many Canadian jurisdictions also legislate point-of-contact control methods.

A physical, chemical or biological hazard cannot be eliminated by PPE, but the risk of injury can be greatly reduced. PPE should only be used: as a short term measure before controls are implemented; where pre-contact control technology is not available; where pre-contact controls are inadequate; during activities such as maintenance, clean up, and repair where pre-contact controls are not feasible or effective; and, during emergency situations.

The CFA along with FCC, CASA and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers that “*PPE only works if you use it!*” For more information on creating a farm safety work plan visit www.ccohs.ca .

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*** Free photos and cartoons are available to accompany this article at www.casa-acsa.ca .

For more information call:

Theresa Whalen–Ruiter, CFA Farm Safety Coordinator

Tel: (613) 822-0016 E-mail: farmsafety@cfafca.ca

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