



Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, March 14 – 20, 2010

FACT SHEET #2

Let safety be a factor in hiring

An important part of effective farm management is hiring and keeping quality farm labour, often in competition with non-farm employers for skilled workers. There are a number of things that should be considered in the hiring process to help ensure that you hire the right person.

“*Plan • Farm • Safety.*” is the theme of this three-year Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign. Each aspect of the theme will be promoted over the next three years. This year the campaign will promote “Plan” with safety walkabouts and planning for safety. In the second year, the focus will be on “Farm” including implementation, documentation and training. In the third year, emphasis will be on “Safety” including assessment, improvement and further development of safety systems.

The year-long “Plan” campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), from March 14 to 20. 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.

“Hiring the right people means accurately assessing each candidate’s knowledge and experience for the position,” says Greg Stewart, FCC President and CEO. “Hiring workers with appropriate skills will help protect you from costly risks and ensure the health and safety of your employees.”

Before interviewing a prospective employee, prepare a list of questions about the various skills you need in a worker. Then use a conversational style of interviewing to evaluate the candidate’s skill levels as you and the candidate walk around the farm. For example, ask the prospective employees what they would do if the combine plugged or if a cow was having trouble calving. Perhaps ask them to fill the tractor with fuel and give a choice between diesel fuel and gasoline. Make it clear that inexperience is not a bad thing as long as the worker knows to ask for advice.

Employees add a number of responsibilities, liabilities and legal requirements to an employer. Be sure to check with your provincial labour relations office to ensure you meet all requirements with regard to taxation, worker compensation, medical insurance, work visas, worker protection standards, minimum wage, benefits, driver’s license, and child labour laws.

Money is a big consideration in labour management but there are other important considerations as well such as benefits and incentives. Whatever “wage package” you offer an employee, be sure it is clear, measurable, in writing, and commensurate with experience. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the wage offered competitive with those of industry and other agricultural employers?

- What would it cost to train and hire someone to replace a worker?
- How should employees be paid – by the hour, week, or month? What about overtime?
- What does a competitive fringe benefits package look like? (i.e. housing, utilities, meat, medical insurance, holidays, paid training, etc.)
- What should my incentive plan be? (i.e. related to production, profits, or unspecified bonus?)

“Employees are looking for a positive work environment that includes recognition and respect,” says Stewart. “While employers want employees to show initiative and pride in their jobs and to contribute to a profitable business, offering a pleasant and conscientious work environment could be one of the most effective profitability tools on your farm.”

The CFA, CASA, FCC and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers that “*Plan • Farm • Safety.*” means that hiring and keeping good farm workers is an important part of risk management and farm management.

- 30 -

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

For more information call:

Theresa Whalen, CFA Farm Safety Consultant

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

To download a copy of this article, visit web sites www.casa-acsa.ca or www.cfa-fca.ca