



### What don't they know?

You know your farm inside and out. However, workers can't be expected to know every detail about your operation. That's why for every operation, it is critical to have a program established that properly introduces young, new or returning workers to the farm. Setting up an orientation program will help transfer some of the knowledge that you have gained from your experience on the farm, to the workers that will be helping you with your daily activities.



### BASIC PROGRAM FOR NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

Core elements of a new employee orientation program should be reviewed with young, new and returning workers. The following sections outline some basic program best practices.

**Policies.** Policies for the farm should be discussed with workers. Review elements such as safety rules, Working Alone policy, smoking areas, drug and alcohol rules and harassment policies.

**Farm-Specific Practices and Procedures.** Review practices and procedures that are specific to your farm. An orientation program should include a review of standard operating procedures for handling livestock, use of farm vehicles, servicing equipment and safe zones (where children or pedestrians may be present).

**Identification of Workplace Hazards.** Specific hazards associated with the farm operation should be shared with workers. Don't assume that a worker experienced with another farming operation will know your equipment, animals or facilities. Take the time to review the hazards that you have identified on your farm.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** PPE requirements and expectations should be reviewed. Does your farm require safe footwear, respiratory, hearing or other forms of protection to be worn? Once you have established the minimum requirements for your operation, ensure that you provide training to workers about proper use, care and maintenance expectations for PPE.

**Emergency Response Plan.** Emergency response protocols

### Definitions

**Young Worker** – Workers between 16 and 18 years of age.

**New Worker** – Workers that are new to the farm location.

**Returning Worker** – Workers that have worked at the farm location previously but not within the last six months.

are a critical component of your orientation program. Your emergency contacts, locations of emergency equipment such as first aid kits, extinguishers, eye wash stations, muster points, rescue plans and emergency responsibilities should be shared with all new workers.

**Communicating Safety.** Safety communications and how workers are to discuss safety issues should be established during orientation. How often will safety meetings be held? Who will conduct inspections? How are incidents handled and reported? Clarify who should be notified for each specific situation.

### YOUNG WORKER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Young farm workers constitute a special category of worker requiring the highest level of support during the orientation process. When you decide to bring young workers onto your operation, you must maintain



your high standards towards training, supervision and ongoing coaching. As a farm owner, you need to determine what specific job tasks a young worker will be capable of performing and what job tasks should not be performed. Customized training for these job tasks will differ depending on the age and capability of the worker.

Recognize that young workers think differently than more mature adults. They tend to:

- Generalize their skills from one task to another;
- Feel that they are immortal and “can’t be hurt;” and
- Feel that they possess the size and strength to overcome any problem.

The amount of full-time supervision of young workers required will depend on the competency and maturity of the individual. One of the most challenging aspects of employing young workers is that they may feel they can do it better than you and don’t need you “looking over their shoulder.” Develop supervisory job roles where the young worker is always working with others and performing tasks with experienced mentors. Do not place young workers in work-alone situations.

## NEW WORKER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Beyond the orientation identified above, the following considerations must be taken into account when providing orientation to new farm workers.

**On-the-Job Training (Hands-On Training).** During on-the-job training, a trainer reviews the relevant introductory training with a worker while they perform a specific job task. The supervisor then evaluates the worker’s capability to perform the work according to expectations. Competency evaluations are common for this type of training. Once the worker has demonstrated that they can perform the job competently and safely, the supervisor will “sign off” on their performance. New workers are not allowed to perform job tasks alone until they have been approved by the farm owner or a supervisor. Provide supervision and periodic visits to the new worker to confirm that they continue to perform the job tasks correctly.

Remember, new workers have no experience with the equipment or processes found on your farm. Even if they have worked with similar equipment or processes at another farm, they do not know your operation. New employees

need training on processes, maintenance, hazards, rules of operation, inspection requirements, and operating limits.

## RETURNING WORKER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Most people are familiar with winter driving conditions in Canada. Every year we spend our summers enjoying relatively safe driving conditions and we forget how to drive in winter conditions. Then the first winter storm of the season hits and we scramble to recall how to drive safely. The same scenario applies to workers returning to the workplace after an extended period away. Operators need to revisit some core training requirements with returning workers to refresh their memories and renew their skills.

**Worker Reorientation.** After being away from a job for an extended period of time, workers tend to forget the rules, policies and procedures of the farm. The complete orientation program should be provided to workers who have been off the farm for six months or more.

**Emergency Plan Review.** Conduct a thorough review of the emergency response plan for your farm.

**Hazards and Hazard Assessment Review.** A combination of factors including time away, and constantly changing conditions on your farm mean that your returning workers may not be aware of the current hazards on your operation. Review all hazards on your farm with your returning workers and go over all hazard assessment processes that apply to your operation.

**Worker Retraining.** Farming is dynamic. Changes routinely occur in equipment, livestock and / or practices. Confirm that returning workers are competent to perform the work and are aware of the current standard operating procedures. Train them on any new equipment, livestock and / or practices.

**Resources**

[www2.worksafebc.com](http://www2.worksafebc.com)  
[wccohs.ca](http://wccohs.ca)

**A little goes a long way**

Proper orientation and training will go a long way to ensuring the safety of everyone who works on your farm. When workers are new, young / or returning after a prolonged absence, it is very important to exercise due diligence and ensure they are aware of your policies

and procedures, know what to do in an emergency, understand how to identify and report hazards, and are comfortable performing their job tasks safely. With a little bit of extra time for review and retraining, you can help keep your farm safe and productive.



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