



Health and safety on Alberta farms and ranches

Includes information on changes for June, 2018

Alberta 

Introduction

The prairie climate and global market conditions challenge Alberta farmers and ranchers from year to year. Many have farmed and ranched in Alberta for generations.

Changes to Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation reflect Alberta farmers and ranchers. Alberta's OHS laws only apply to farm and ranch operations that employ waged workers who are not the owner or the owner's family members. There are some exemptions. See farm and ranch exemptions at the end of this document.

Protecting your workers from injury and illness is the right thing to do. While it's true that the new OHS legislation applies to a specific audience (i.e. waged farm/ranch workers, supervisors, leadhands, and their employers), the spirit of ensuring good health and safety practices on the farm behind the law is good for everyone.

This handbook is an introduction to the fundamental rights and responsibilities employers and workers have right now when it comes to occupational health and safety on Alberta farms and ranches. It explains what you need to do to be in compliance with the *OHS Act* and Regulations.

It provides examples of some of the more common hazards on a farm or ranch setting, and what can be done to help keep everyone healthy and safe on the job. It also explains what to do and what to expect in the event that, despite everyone's best efforts, an incident occurs.

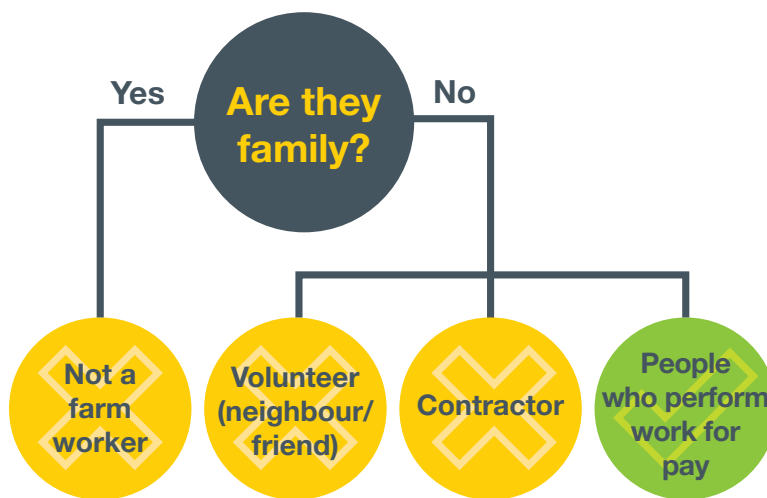
As a worker, your efforts to remain healthy and safe on the job will serve you well. By paying attention to hazards on the job and following safe work practices along with your co-workers, you're making sure your job adds to the quality of your life instead of taking from it.

As an employer, protecting your workers from injury and illness is the right thing to do. While OHS legislation only applies to some of Alberta's farms and ranches, the spirit behind the law in ensuring good health and safety practices on the farm or ranch benefits everyone.

Is this about you?

Certain OHS laws apply to farm and ranch operations where people who are not the owner or related to the owner are paid for their work. If you have waged workers who are not related to you by blood, marriage or adoption, or are not in an adult interdependent relationship with you, you are an employer. There are some exemptions. See farm and ranch exemptions at the end of this document.

Who's considered a worker



Both employers and workers are included under Alberta's occupational health and safety laws. This means both have legal rights and responsibilities. There are some exemptions. See farm and ranch exemptions at the end of this document.

Your rights and responsibilities

Occupational health and safety is about preventing worksite-related injuries, disease and deaths. To that end, the law assigns specific responsibilities to employers and workers. You need to know what's expected of you in your role, and what you have the right to expect from others.

As an employer...

You're expected to do everything you reasonably can do to keep workers healthy and safe on the job.

You must:

- make sure workers are properly qualified to do the work, or at least working with, or are supervised by someone with the proper training and experience
- inform your workers about the hazards related to their work, and how to work safe in spite of those hazards
- prevent violence and harassment in the work site
- implement a joint worksite health and safety committee for 20 or more workers at a work site
- have a health and safety representative if you have 5-19 workers at a worksite

As a worker...

You share the responsibility of staying healthy and safe on the job.

You're expected to:

- look out for yourself and for others at or close to the work site workers
- report any hazards unsafe or harmful work you notice to your employer
- follow your employer's health and safety practices
- refrain from participating in harassment and violence on the work site

Refusing unsafe work

You have the right to refuse unsafe work you believe would put yourself or others in danger. You will need to explain to your employer the reason you're refusing to do the work. You may be reassigned to a different task while your employer addresses the hazard.

If you don't know how to do something, ask. You cannot be punished for refusing to do unsafe work.



About hazards

Some of the hazards connected to working on a farm or ranch are the same as those found in other industries. Others are unique to agriculture. When you know about the hazards specific to the task at hand, you can take action to either eliminate them, or come up with a safer alternative.

A work site hazard is a situation, condition or thing that may be dangerous to health or safety.

There are hazards related to health and to safety.

A health hazard is anything that could cause harm to someone's health, either right away or over an extended period of time.



loud noises



chemicals



dust



bacteria

A safety hazard is anything that could cause injury or damage (usually right away).



machinery



moving equipment



equipment/slopes



fall from heights



tripping



weather

Some hazards have the potential to diminish a person's quality of life in some way for some time. Others can be deadly. Health and safety is serious business. Employers need to identify possible hazards before they prove to be a problem.

Hazards are not always obvious

Worksite hazards can be grouped into four main categories. When scanning the farm or ranch for possible hazards, think about all four:

Physical



machinery



moving equipment



confined spaces



slips, trips and falls



lifting heavy loads



livestock

Biological



bacteria



mould



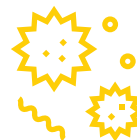
animal waste



methane gas

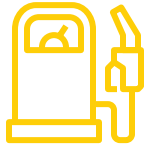


zoonotic
(transmittable diseases)



allergens

Chemical



fuel



pesticides



fertilizer



solvents



disinfectants



herbicides



medication
(for livestock)

Psychological



fatigue
(long hours)



stress



distraction
(cell phone)



working alone



impairment



violence

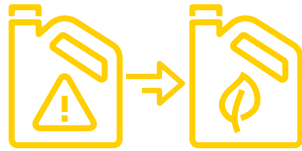
Do something about them

"If only." These two small words can be filled with infinite regret.

Knowing about the hazards is the first step to creating a healthy and safe work environment for everyone. The next step is to act on what you know.

If there's a way to eliminate a hazard, do it.

Eliminating a hazard doesn't always have to be complicated or expensive. Sometimes it simply involves thinking about and doing things a little differently than before.



substitution of a chemical product
with something less toxic



remove the keys from equipment
before doing maintenance

If elimination of a hazard is not possible, you'll need to figure out what you can do to lower risks. You will always have options.

Realistically, it's not going to be possible to eliminate every single hazard found on Alberta farms and ranches. Things like moving equipment, livestock and long hours are all part and parcel to the operations. They are here to stay, but that doesn't mean they cannot be controlled.

Employers are required to keep their workers healthy and safe on the job. Here are some of the ways you might approach controlling hazards, depending on the situation:

At the source	Between the source and the worker	At the worker
 <p>insulate for sound</p>	 <p>follow safe work practices</p>	 <p>fitted clothing</p>
 <p>vent exhaust</p>	 <p>have an emergency response plan</p>	 <p>reflective clothing</p>
 <p>use manufacturer's safety features</p>	 <p>provide proper training and/or supervision</p>	 <p>eye protection</p>
 <p>use the right equipment for the job</p>	 <p>limit exposure to the hazard</p>	 <p>hearing protection</p>
 <p>keep cab windows clean</p>		 <p>proper footwear</p>
 <p>install safety measures</p>		 <p>respiratory protection</p>

Tell everyone

As an employer you need to communicate the hazards and what to do about them to everyone on the job. What people don't know can hurt them.

Employers should:

- show your workers that you take everyone's health and safety seriously
- keep health and safety top of mind by talking about it regularly
- post key health and safety messaging in common areas
- encourage everyone to share "near miss" incidents

A potentially serious incident that did not cause serious injury or damage but could have under slightly different circumstances. It's one of those heart-pounding moments when you realize luck was the only thing that kept you or somebody else from getting hurt.

As a worker, if you don't know the hazards of your job, ask your employer.

Workers should ask:

- What are the hazards of the job?
- What do I need to do to stay safe at work?
- Do I need any special training?
- Do I need any personal protective equipment?

If someone gets hurt

Despite everyone's best efforts, incidents can happen. If something does go wrong and somebody gets hurt, you need to know what to do.

First things first

When it's safe to do so, taking care of the injured person is your priority. Get them appropriate medical care right away.

Once you've made sure the injured person has received necessary medical attention, the incident needs to be reported.

Reporting requirements

Workers have to let their employer know about work site incidents as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the incident or its consequences, employers might be required to report it to Alberta Occupational Health and Safety. You're expected to do so as soon as possible.

Report to the Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre

Incidents that need to be reported to Alberta Occupational Health and Safety:

- an injury or incident that results in death
- an injury or incident that results in a worker being admitted to a hospital for more than two days
- an unplanned or uncontrolled explosion, fire or flood that causes or has the potential of causing a serious injury
- the collapse or upset of a crane, derrick or hoist
- the collapse or failure of any component of a building or structure necessary for the structural integrity of the building or structure
- potentially serious incidents

If you don't know whether or not you should report an injury or incident, call the OHS Contact Centre and ask.



Call the OHS Contact Centre

1-866-415-8690 (toll-free in Alberta)

Have this information ready

If you need to call, try to provide as much information as possible, such as:

- location of the incident or injury
- date and time of the incident or injury
- main contact person and phone number
- name of the employer

When to report an incident to the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)

If the worker already has, or it's expected they will have to visit a doctor because of the work site injury or illness, the employer is also required to report the incident to the WCB.

Workers are expected to report an injury to their employer as soon as possible. Employers then have 72 hours to report the injury to the WCB.

If you don't know whether or not you should report an injury or incident, call the WCB and ask. They will provide guidance.



Call the WCB

1-866-922-9221 (toll-free in Alberta)

Alberta Farm Safety Program and OHS Officers

The Alberta Farm Safety Program provides educational resources to encourage a culture of health and safety on the farm. This program focuses on awareness, education and training in safe work practices and general farm health and safety for all ages. You can access a lot of practical information here, including step-by-step instructions on how to develop a voluntary, well-rounded health and safety management system for your farming and ranching operations.

Visit agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety to tap into the many educational resources offered.

OHS Officers are a resource for farmers, ranchers and their workers. They inspect work sites throughout the province for compliance with OHS legislation, and support and educate employers in creating and maintaining a healthy and safe work site for everyone.

For information or advice:



Call the OHS Contact Centre

1-866-415-8690 (toll-free in Alberta)

When something goes wrong and a work site incident occurs, OHS Officers may need to investigate. They look into health and safety incidents on farms and ranches across the province with an eye to preventing similar incidents, and ensure employers are meeting their legislative responsibilities.

Incident investigation

The goals of incident investigation are to:

- determine what happened
- figure out what can be done to prevent similar incidents from happening again

In most cases, the employer will be responsible for investigating a work site incident. The employer may need to prepare and submit a report that outlines what happened and what's being done to prevent a similar incident from happening again.

If the incident is of a serious nature, an OHS Officer may conduct an independent investigation. As part of a formal investigation, an OHS Officer is authorized to:

- visit the work site where the incident occurred
- ask questions to determine the circumstances leading up to the incident
- request information from anyone present at the time of the incident or anyone who has information relating to it
- secure and collect any evidence from the scene
- stop work activities or equipment use on site (related to the incident)

OHS Officers will only stop work activities if it's necessary to their investigation, or to ensure the health and safety of the workers until the hazards are either eliminated or effectively controlled.

You've got this: additional resources

There are plenty of worksite health and safety resources available for workers and employers. Here's a list to help get you started. Some of these will help with the basics. Some go further.

AgSafe Alberta

www.agsafeab.ca

Alberta Farm Safety Program

agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety

Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

casa-acsa.ca

Employer's Guide to Occupational Health and Safety

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/LI009

Hazard Assessment and Control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/BP018

Occupational Health and Safety Act

work.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety/ohs-act-regulation-and-code.html

Report an OHS Incident

work.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety/report-an-incident.html

Reporting and Investigating Serious Injury and Incidents

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/LI016

Reporting and Investigating Potential Serious Incidents

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/LI016-1

Worker's Guide to Occupational Health and Safety

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/LI008

Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committees

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/LI037

Do I need a health and safety program?

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/LI036-1

Farm and ranch exemptions

Exempt Person

The Occupational Health and Safety Legislation does not apply to farming and ranching operations specified in the Farming and Ranching Exemption Regulation where

- no wages are paid to persons; or
- wages are paid only to
 - » family members of a sole proprietor;
 - » family members of a partner in a partnership where all partners are family members of the same family; or
 - » shareholders or family members of a shareholder of a corporation where all shareholders are family members of the same family.

Please note that in farming and ranching operations where there are exempt persons working alongside non-exempt workers, the exempt person is obligated to follow the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Section 5, which states:

Every worker shall, while engaged in an occupation,

- a. take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of the worker and of other workers present while the worker is working, and
- b. co-operate with the worker's supervisor or employer or any other person for the purposes of protecting the health and safety of
 - (i) the worker,
 - (ii) other workers engaged in the work of the employer, and
 - (iii) other workers not engaged in the work of that employer but present at the work site at which that work is being carried out.

“wages” is defined as follows:

“wages” includes salary, pay, money paid for time off instead of overtime pay, commission or remuneration for work, however calculated, but does not include

- (i) overtime pay, vacation pay, general holiday pay and termination pay,
- (ii) a payment made as a gift or bonus that is dependent on the discretion of an employer and that is not related to hours of work, production or efficiency,
- (iii) expenses or an allowance provided instead of expenses, or
- (iv) tips or other gratuities;

Employment Standards Code, s.1(x)

“family member” is defined as follows:

“family member”, in relation to a shareholder, sole proprietor or partner, means

- (i) the spouse or adult interdependent partner of the shareholder, sole proprietor or partner, or
- (ii) whether by blood, marriage or adoption or by virtue of an adult interdependent relationship, a child, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew or first cousin of the shareholder, sole proprietor or partner or of the shareholder’s, sole proprietor’s or partner’s spouse or adult interdependent partner, and includes any other person prescribed by the regulations to be a family member;

Occupational Health and Safety Act, Section 1

Non-Exempt Worker

The Occupational Health and Safety legislation, with the exception of the Occupational Health and Safety Code, applies in relation to paid workers who are not the owners or family of the owners, working in a farming and ranching operation described in Section 2(1) of the Farming and Ranching Exemption Regulation. For more information, see section 1 *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

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The information provided in this guide is solely for the user's information and convenience and, while thought to be accurate and functional, it is provided without warranty of any kind. Further, if there is any inconsistency or conflict between any of the information contained in this guide and the applicable legislative requirement, the legislative requirement shall prevail. If in doubt, please refer to the current edition of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Regulation. The Crown, its agents, employees or contractors will not be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of the information contained in this guide.

This guide is current to June 2018. The law can change with new legislation, amendments to existing legislation, and decisions from the courts. It is important that you keep up with these changes and keep yourself informed of the current law.

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Contact us

Province-wide OHS Contact Centre

To connect with OHS:

1-866-415-8690

For the deaf or hard-of-hearing (TDD/TTY)

1-800-232-7215

work.alberta.ca/OHS

Feedback survey

work.alberta.ca/ohsresourcesurvey

Alberta Farm Safety Program

Farm.Safety@gov.ab.ca

agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety

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