



October Newsletter

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IT'S SAFE TO SAY

A Message from our Leader

Welcome to the October 2021 newsletter. This month's topic is restricted and confined spaces. It's a timely reminder as this is usually the time of year I will hear about people entering their bins, becoming entrapped, and not surviving. What surprises me is that we are all aware of this risk and yet it keeps happening.

The article below points out the many places on a farm where you can find restricted or confined spaces. Make a note of where these spaces can be found on your farm and start making plans as to how you and others can work safely if someone has to enter them. Involve your farm team in the planning and training and make sure it is written down. In the words of Gordon B. Hinckley,

“You can't plow a field simply by turning it over in your mind.”

Also check if your local fire department has grain rescue equipment and has had the training to use it. The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) offers training for fire departments to learn how to use this equipment. This trailer is back in Alberta this month, so let's put it to some good use.

I also encourage you to view the film SILO (<https://www.silothefilm.com/>). This is a feature length film about a grain entrapment that can be streamed or purchased. This could even be planned for a community screening. AgSafe Alberta screened it in January and we had a very positive response and requests to show it again.

Lastly, take some time to check in on a neighbour, this year has been hard for many, and someone you know may need a shoulder to lean on. AgSafe Alberta is offering In The Know mental health literacy workshops, call us to get one organized in your area and learn how to recognize the signs and what to do if someone you know needs help.

WCB has recently developed these resources to help recognize mental health concerns in the workplace:

[Mental health at work](#): You play an important role in your worker's mental well-being in the workplace. Learn how to recognize mental health concerns at work and discover helpful strategies to encourage positive mental health and a balanced workload.

[Conversations tool kit](#): It can be challenging to initiate conversations with a worker who is dealing with life or work stressors. Learn effective strategies for communication that promotes a safe psychological environment for your worker.

Lastly, if you have questions or concerns we are always here to help. You can contact our team anytime.

- For general inquiries:
info@agasafeab.ca /403-219-7901

- For our hotline for incidence
assistance: 1-833-9AGSAFE

Jody Wacowich
AgSafe Alberta Executive Director



SAFETY MINUTE

Restricted & Confined Spaces: An Introduction

Restricted and confined spaces are much more common on farms than most people realize. Some examples include:

- Storage or feed bins
- Root cellars
- Sea cans
- Pump sheds
- Septic tanks
- Manure pits
- Silos
- Cisterns
- Conveyor tunnels
- Sumps
- Wells
- Storage tanks
- Composting ponds
- Crawl spaces
- Bunkers



Restricted Space

- Enclosed or partially enclosed space
- Not designed or meant for people to be in it continuously
- Difficult to get in and/or out of because of its how it is built
- Example: the attic or crawl space of a building

A *restricted space* can be thought of as a work area that would be difficult to get in or out of and have all other hazards eliminated or appropriately controlled as per Part 2 of the Alberta OHS Code.

Confined Space

Is a *restricted space* which is or may become hazardous (cause harm) to a person entering it because of:

- An atmosphere that has too little or too much oxygen, is flammable, explosive or toxic
- A condition or changing set of events that may cause illness or injury
- The potential for an activity to produce dangerous or harmful results in the space
- The basic characteristics of an activity that can produce dangerous or harmful results in the space (i.e., gases produced by welding reaching harmful concentrations)

A restricted space can become a confined space if the conditions or work practices change. A space that has been safely entered countless times before can, over time or suddenly, become deadly and it is very possible that someone will not realize it before entering.

Remember, as both restricted and confined spaces are difficult to get in and/or out of, it can be quite challenging to provide first aid, rescue someone, or

evacuate a space. This means that everyone will need appropriate training and equipment, as well as be familiar with the *practiced* response plan the farm has in place to respond appropriately should an emergency arise.

Restricted and confined spaces can be complicated, which is why AgSafe Alberta is here to support you. We welcome you to contact us with any questions you may have or to schedule an advisor visit either by email at info@agsafeab.ca or by calling our hotline at 1-833-924-7233.



Are You Alert to the Confined Spaces on Your Farm?

In the alert entitled Preventing Occupational Fatalities in Confined Spaces (No. 86-110), the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) noted the following:

- Confined spaces can be found in almost any occupation, including agriculture.
- Recognition of confined spaces is the first step in preventing fatalities; once this is done, the particular hazards will need to be identified and appropriately controlled.
- Deaths often result from an oxygen deficient or toxic atmosphere that could easily have been caught through atmospheric testing prior to entry, and continual monitoring after.
- Deaths also result from poor or incorrect emergency response procedures; in fact, more than 60% of confined space fatalities were among would-be rescuers.

Download the Common Hazards of Confined

Spaces Checklist and Flow Chart Here

Are You In The Know When It Comes to Mental Health?

AgSafe Alberta is proud to bring **In the Know** to our province. This four-hour workshop is designed to help farmers and others in the agricultural community learn about mental health and illness, promote wellbeing in their own lives, learn how to recognize when someone is struggling, and understand how to respond to these situations. The course has been developed specifically for farmers and evaluated by researchers from the University of Guelph.



Who should attend?

- Farmers and ranchers
- Family members
- Peers and allies within agriculture, such as veterinarians, seed or feed salespeople, financial institutions, accountants, and other community members who have direct contact with farm owners/operators.

Learning objectives of this workshop include the ability to:

- Describe stress, anxiety, depression, acute trauma, suicide and substance abuse
- Recognize signs and symptoms of mental distress
- Describe approaches for engaging in safe conversations about mental health with someone who may be struggling

- Identify appropriate people and/or organizations that can provide help/support/resources for someone who may be struggling

If you would like to schedule a workshop for your workplace or your community, please email us at info@agsafeab.ca or visit <https://albertaitk.ca/>.

Visit Take11.ca for helpful hints on restricted/confined spaces on your farm



Watch our short video on restricted/confined space

SAFETY FIRST, LAST THOUGHTS

Why NOT to Burn Ag Plastics



Farmers use a variety of plastics in their operations, such as bailer twine, silage wrap, grain bags and pesticide containers. Unfortunately, access to recycling facilities for agricultural plastics can be limited and even restricted at municipal landfill sites. While farmers realize the importance of caring for their land and make good efforts to do so, the open burning of waste plastics on farms is not unheard of.

The burning of agricultural plastics can release pollutants such as volatile organic compounds, fine particulates, and other hazardous by-products. Even disposing of household garbage in a burning barrel has been found to be a significant source of dioxin emissions and furans. Dioxins and furans are toxic chemicals that even in small quantities are associated with endocrine system disruption, heart disease, cognitive and motor disabilities and are a known human carcinogen.

In a 2010 survey performed by Black Sheep Strategy on behalf of CleanFARMS, the farmers surveyed reported that over one quarter of them feel that burning or burying their plastic agricultural waste is not the best option, but also feel they have no other choice. Fortunately, CleanFarms.ca is a great resource for finding an [Alberta Ag-Plastic Collection Site](#) near you and to obtain other resources relating to [pesticide and livestock/animal medication collection](#) not only in Alberta, but across Canada.

Pathways of Exposure to Pollutants from Burning Agricultural Plastics

Exposure to the volatile organic compounds, fine particulates, and other hazardous by-products from the open burning of agricultural plastics occurs from

inhalation (breathing in), or ingestion (eating) of contaminated plants and meat of farm animals (the contaminants concentrate in animal fat).



Adapted from CleanFARMS Inc. Figure1: Pathways of Exposure to Pollutants from Burning Ag Plastics. Ontario Agricultural Waste Study: Environmental Impacts of Open-Burning Agricultural Plastics, 2011.



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