



June 2020

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## How to get started on your Farm Safe Plan

Ensuring your farm is as safe as it can be may be the last thing on your mind right now.

But it should be one of farmers' top priorities, says Sherri Marthaller, Farm Safety Advisor with AgSafe Alberta.

"Having a farm safety plan in place is no different than having a plan to protect yourself from weather, market access issues and other common risks," she says.

There are two main reasons to have a safety plan in place, she says.

First of all, to protect employees.

This should always be a top priority, Sherri says, but especially now as we are heading into the busy season.

"Many farmers don't have resources in place to cover for employees that may get sick or hurt," she says.

The second reason is that farm safety is just good business practice.

**“Especially with new legislation in place, farmers are pretty exposed from a liability standpoint,” Sherri says.**

This is why it’s especially important to understand what the risks are and make good choices around that.

But despite these important reasons, Sherri says many farmers still don’t have a farm safety plan in place, despite the fact that we are heading into the higher stress months of farming, when accidents are more likely to occur.

If you are one of these farmers, here are some simple steps you can take to get started.

### **1. Visit the AgSafe Alberta website.**

There are many resources on there to help get you thinking about farm safety, Sherri says, including an orientation to get you started on creating a plan, farm safety tips, hazard assessment examples, and more.

### **2. Start customizing a plan for your farm**

Every farm is different and has different safety requirements and considerations, Sherri says, which is why you need a custom approach. To help with this, AgSafe Alberta offers ten free hours of consultation for farmers with a safety advisor like Sherri. Visit the website to learn more.

### **3. Be mindful of the most common high-risk on-farm hazards.**

If nothing else, it’s good practice for farmers to always be aware of what the risks are, Sherri says. AgSafe Alberta has compiled a list of the common on-farm hazards that tend to yield the most severe injuries.

Some of the main ones are:

**Heights** – There’s always a danger of falling when you’re working on bins, roofs, etc., Sherri says. Your best option is to ensure these structures have the proper equipment to prevent falls, like railings and stairs, but if that’s not possible, have fall protection in place.

**Energy isolation** – Ensure that whatever you’re working on, such as augers, moving part belts, etc., aren’t energized, Sherri says. Unplug things or ensure no residual energy is remaining in the equipment before you start working on them.

“Moving parts are bad when body parts are involved,” she says

**Electrocution** -- Overhead lines – especially low-hanging ones -- are a hazard on many farms, Sherri says. In these cases, it’s best to eliminate the hazard altogether if possible, by burying them. If that’s not an option, substitute or engineer the lines out of reach as much as possible. If nothing else, ensure you have the proper protocols and training in place to keep workers safe.

**Animal handling** – Animals have a mind their own, Sherri says. The best way to deal with that is to

ensure that people working with them have a general knowledge of animal behaviour and know the proper tools and practices to deal with them and protect themselves from uncontrolled behaviour.

**Motor vehicles** – Often farms and homes reside on the same land, which can put residents at risk with all the large farm equipment moving around the property. General rules for safety around this include having designated work zones, maintaining high visibility, and generally knowing who is working where at all times, Sherri says.

To learn more of the most common hazards, visit the [AgSafe Alberta website](#).



## Resources

The following resources will help you get up to speed on the basics. Find the forms and templates you need to start your own safety plan, provide simple training for your employees, plus important links to WCB and Occupational Health and Safety materials.

### QUICKSTART GUIDES

Everything you need to get started.

### FORMS & TEMPLATES

Customizable forms to fast track your planning.

### TOOLBOX TALKS

A record template plus information sheets for common hazards.

### OTHER RESOURCES

Links and compliance guides.

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## Chemical Safety and Storage

As a farmer, you deal with a lot of chemicals throughout a growing season – fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, sanitizers, cleaners, crop preservatives, fuel, solvents, motor oil, and more.

These are all toxic substances. Mishandling them can cause reactions ranging from minor irritations to lifelong chronic conditions and even fatalities.




Which is why it's so important that farmers thoroughly understand the safety protocols around chemical use and storage.

At such a busy time of year, devoting time and resources to safety may seem like a waste of time.





But it's critical to be mindful of the basics of safe chemical use now and always. Here's a brief refresher, as per the Government of Alberta farm safety guidelines.

## KNOW THE JOB

- Make sure everyone dealing with chemicals is properly trained in advance for handling the products. Limit the exposure of your staff as much as possible.
- Never expose anyone unnecessarily to harmful chemicals.
- Ensure appropriate safety procedures and personal protection equipment are provided for anyone dealing with harmful chemicals.
- Before handling any chemicals, read the label! It contains all the information you need about safe usage and safety concerns.
- Ensure you know and understand all the safety symbols and warnings.

Warning Words	Graphic	Meaning
CAUTION		Hazards that could result in minor to moderate injury, or will alert against unsafe practices.
WARNING		Hazards that could potentially cause death or serious injury.
DANGER		The highest level of hazard; indicates there is a high probability of death or serious injury if the hazard is not avoided.

	Corrosive: acetic, caustic.		Flammable: combustible, may catch fire in presence of spark or flame.
	Explosive: dangerous, unstable, may explode in unsafe conditions.		Poison: toxic enough to cause death or disability if inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin in sufficient quantity.

## KNOW THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS

Ensure you know potential hazards and protocols related to working with chemicals.

- **Transportation:** Never leave pesticides unattended in a parked vehicle, unless it is locked or parked where public access is denied. Post a warning sign on the vehicle if you leave it unattended or if you are transporting more than 500 litres of pesticides.
- **Storage:** Pesticides must be stored in their original labelled containers in a screened, ventilated area designated for this purpose, and far enough away from storage for other commodities that cross-contamination is prevented.
- **Spills:** In the case of a chemical spill, only trained personnel wearing adequate protective equipment should be involved in the cleanup. Call the Alberta Environment Response Centre at 1-800-222-6514.
- **Handling:** always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment before handling any chemicals, including chemical-resistant coveralls, gloves, boots, respirator and goggles.

- Exposure: Ensure you know the symptoms of chemical exposure and if you or anyone has these symptoms, know what to do about it.
- Disposal: Do not reuse empty chemical containers. Take them to an approved recycling facility. Discard measuring utensils properly. Call your local municipal office to find the nearest site.

## KNOW THE DRILL

Safety around chemicals is YOUR responsibility. Make sure you always know proper etiquette for chemical handling and storage and if you don't know, ask the right people and find the right answers.

[Government of Alberta – Farm Safety.](http://agsafeab.ca)  
[agsafeab.ca](http://agsafeab.ca)

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## FarmSafe Webinar Series

Thanks to everyone that tuned in for our May webinars! Keep an eye out for the next in our series in June on Hazard Assessment and Control.



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## How to have a Toolbox Talk



## What's a Toolbox Talk?

A Toolbox Talk is a short, informal meeting with your farm workers or family to go over specific tasks or potential safety hazards on your farm. These can be held before a specific job needs to be done on a regular basis to refresh the safety knowledge on your farm.

You can keep track of what jobs and hazards you've gone over and with who by downloading a [training record](#).

AgSafe Alberta has pre-made Toolbox Talks ready for your next meeting:

[What to expect when Alberta OHS Officers conduct an investigation](#)

[Safety Around Livestock or Farm Animals](#)

[Tractor Safety: Runover and Rollover Prevention](#)

[Training Workers](#)

[Water Hazards](#)

[Working Alone](#)

[Well Water Gases](#)

Or you can use the format and create your own Toolbox Talk customized to your operation and staff. Toolbox Talks have relevant information about each job or hazards, things you should make sure your workers and family know, and places to find more information.

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## We want to hear from you!

Every month, we will be including a survey question for our subscribers about ag safety!

June's question is:

***Do you use the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling chemicals?***



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