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Work Health and Safety on Farms

Let's talk work health and safety on farms.

Working on farms can present risks and challenges for farmers, workers, contractors and visitors (including children and their friends).

A couple of years ago, the farming commodities and SafeWork SA worked jointly in preparing policies and procedures and a Guidebook. It is now time to visit this issue and address farm safety.

Where can you find policies and procedures to help with managing WHS on the farm?

1. Let's get started

The first step is to download by clicking on this link [Farmers' Guidebook to work health and safety](#). (Hard copies and a USB may still be available from SafeWork SA and Livestock SA.)

2. So, what can be done to minimise the risk?

It is important that the [Farmers' Guidebook to work health and safety](#) be used from induction right through to policies, procedures and risk identification.

3. Quick safety scans/checklist for a safe work place

Pages 22-27 of the Guidebook provide a quick overview of what needs to be done to improve safety on your farm. Use these quick safety scans to look at key work health and safety issues on your property. Those items where you tick 'Sometimes' or 'Never' will need action to fix or improve. Use the safety solutions suggested earlier in the Guide to help you improve.

4. Personal protective equipment

Page 21 in the Guidebook explains that personal protective equipment (PPE) is equipment that will protect the user against risks of health or safety at work. Relying on PPE will not reduce the risk of an incident but can reduce the severity of an injury. For example, wearing a helmet could reduce the severity of a head injury to a quad bike rider but clearly it does not prevent an incident from happening.

Sometimes PPE is mandatory. For example, respiratory protection is mandatory for asbestos removal and spray painting.



5. First Aid

Due to the nature of farm work, portable first aid kits should be provided in vehicles (e.g. tractors, harvesters, farm utes and trucks, and quad bikes). They should be safely located so they don't become a projectile in the event of an incident.

At least one person should hold a current First Aid Certificate and be appointed as the First Aid Officer.

The *Pastoral Award 2010* prescribes that the employee ***designated*** by the employer to render first aid, and in addition to his or her usual duties, and who is the ***current holder of a recognised first aid qualification*** (St John Ambulance or similar body), must be paid a daily allowance of 14% of the standard rate to carry out such work.

6. What is the primary duty of care?

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* requires a person conducting a business or undertaking, to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers engaged by that person, or under the direction of that person, and

- a) that the work environment is without risk to health and safety
- b) that their maintenance of safe plant and structures is maintained
- c) that safe work systems are applied
- d) the safe use, handling and storage of plant, structures and substances and to provide information, training, instructional supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risk to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking
- e) that the health of workers and conditions at the workplace are monitored for the purpose of preventing illness or injury of workers arising from the conduct of the business or undertaking.

To put it simply employers must provide

- a) a safe work place;
- b) identify potential risks of injury,
- c) rectify those risks;
- d) make sure that employees wear PPEs;
- e) employees receive appropriate training;
- f) employees do not engage in unsafe work practices;
- g) do not use equipment and machinery for which they do not hold an appropriate ticket,



- h) do not use machinery or equipment for which they have not been trained to use that equipment and machinery and,
- i) be prepared to counsel or discipline employees for failing to follow the policies and procedures and lawful instructions by the employer.

7. Do these provisions apply to contractors and their employees?

Yes.

The Guide has a Contractor Safety Management plan (page 150-151).

Contractors must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and also for acts or omissions so as not to adversely affect the health and safety of other people. Contractors are also required to comply with instructions from the employer, so far as the contractor is reasonably able to do so.

8. What is the best way to communicate instructions to workers and contractors in relation to working in a safe working environment?

On page 126 of the Guidebook, there is an induction checklist for employees. This checklist should be completed when a new employee starts work. It is also a good idea to follow up several months later to reinforce your expectations as an employer and to comply with legislative requirements.

9. How do I inform a contractor?

Pages 149–150 in the Guidebook provide a step-by-step process that needs to be followed.

10. Do workers have a duty of care?

Yes. Safety is a joint venture.

While at work, the worker must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other people. The worker must also follow and comply with any instructions from the employer, so far as the worker is reasonably able to do so.

The worker is also required to cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure set by the employer relating to health and safety at the workplace that has been notified to the workers.

11. If we have a serious injury that requires hospitalisation or a death, what am I required to do?

You are required to contact and notify SafeWork SA that you are reporting a notifiable injury or illness and dangerous incident as soon as is practicable to do so. SafeWork SA operates 24 hours, 7 days a week and can be contacted on 1300 365 255, by fax to 8204 9200 or by email to swsaheicohs@sa.gov.au.



12. What is a notifiable incident to SafeWork SA?

A notifiable incident includes:

- a) a death of a person
- b) serious injury or illness of a person
- c) a dangerous incident
- d) one involving an overnight hospital stay.

13. Workers Compensation- what do I need to do?

Any injury that results in a workers' compensation claim should be reported to your ReturnToWorkSA claims agent as soon as is practical.

In South Australia there are two claims agents – Employers Mutual Limited (EML) and Gallagher Bassett. If you do not know which of these is your agent, contact ReturnToWorkSA on 13 18 55 or via email to info@rtwsa.com and quote your Employer number.

If you report within five business days, you will not have to pay for the first two weeks' wages.

The sooner the worker returns to work, the less your levy will cost so report early and assist the worker to return to work early.

The longer the worker is away, the sicker they will be and the more frustrated you will become. An early return to work is in everyone's interest.

A claim is lodged when the worker:

- notifies you that an injury has occurred at work and time off
- medical costs have occurred or are about to occur
- when the Agent advises a claim has been lodged, or
- you receive a claim for medical expenses.

If you receive a claim, get advice early and contact LSA office or Chas Cini on 8331 2422 or info@mers.com.au

So, what can be done to minimise the risk?

It is important that the *Farmers' Guidebook to work health and safety* be used from induction right through to policies, procedures, and risk identification.

Need more information?

Please contact us and we will be pleased to assist.