

Child Safety – Farm Workplace & Home

“But this is our home!”

Many farmers struggle to recognise the difference between their farm being both a home and a workplace.

The Victorian Farmers Federation stresses to farmers the importance of providing a fence around the home (e.g. pool fencing, colour bond fencing) so as to ensure a safe area for younger children to play in.

When a farmer crosses the boundary between the fence line (real or hypothetical) that separates the home from the workplace they are actually walking into a ‘workplace’. When children are old enough to cross that boundary line with the intent of performing farming work they also are walking into your workplace. You must make sure that the workplace and the tasks that you are getting them to perform are safe.

If we ensure a safe workplace for our employees – it will be safer for our children

Many of the incidents that have involved children have involved the same causation factors as many of the incidents that have resulted in the injuries or deaths of adult farm workers.

There are clearly a range of other considerations however that do make children more vulnerable to the risks of an incident and these matters are discussed further in this guidance, but there are clear parallels between Occupational Health and Safety and the safety of our children.

Putting anyone on a quad bike that is not fitted with an Operator Protective Device (OPD) and a helmet is a dangerous activity at any time, but the risks of death or serious injury are increased significantly when the operator is a child. A child may not have the physical size or capacity to engage in dynamic riding (i.e. shifting their weight) to be able to ride a quad bike safely.

If you provide a safe workplace for yourself and your employees, then there is an increased likelihood that the workplace will also be safe for your children.

Ensuring the safety of your working children involves more than just ensuring they are able to safely perform a task. Adults must also continually minimize hazards and mitigate risks in the workplace and employ protective strategies, such as ensuring high risk control measures are in place and effective and providing personal protective equipment, training and supervision.

Children may not have the same level of critical thinking than an adult, particularly an experienced adult, has when working around machinery, but also when receiving instruction from adults – they may feel that something is safe just because an adult has said to do it.

Every adult on the farm must lead by example. By adults setting the example and establishing a proactive safety culture your children will learn the behaviours and skills to complement a safe system

of working life on farm and take those skills, awareness and attitudes into their lives on and off farm. Modelling appropriate behaviour is one of many tools that can make farms safer. If the workplace is not safe for your employees - it is not going to be safe for your working children.

GET HELP

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