MAKING OUR FARMS SAFER

Victorian Farmers Federation

Occupational Health and Safety

Consultancy Handbook

Acknowledgement

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Consultancy Handbook

This OHS Consultancy handbook is designed to assist a business to meet their responsibilities. The handbook provides businesses with direct answers to the questions that were asked during the consultancy, gives them a reference for when it's needed and provides some of the tools that they will need to implement their OHS Program.

The Consultancy is not an audit. It will provide you with some insights into areas where you are currently complying with OHS legal requirements and areas where you may need some guidance.

Provision of advice during the consultancy

During the consultancy VFF's Farm Safety Team will have endeavoured to provide the management representative with as much simple OHS advice as time permitted. The advice that was provided is not training. It is highly recommended that suitable training be undertaken where it is identified that management representatives has not had training.

Workplace OHS policies

One of the items discussed is the importance of OHS policies and procedures within the workplace. A range of sample policy templates for business owners will be provided to implement in their workplaces.

All workplace policies that are implemented must remain a living ongoing document. It is not enough just to produce a policy document; the workplace must adhere to the appropriate conduct outlined in the policies.

Workplace policies need to be reviewed from time to time so that information remains current and to reaffirm the company's commitment.

As part of their induction, new employees need to be given a copy of all policies prior to commencing employment.

Meeting your OHS responsibilities

The material provided by the VFF Farm Safety Team is not sufficient to prevent future occupational health and safety liabilities. In addition, employers must ensure that they actively implement any policies, procedures and systems of work and actively maintain a workplace that is healthy and safe to prevent future accidents or injuries.

The consultancy includes discussion in relation to the majority of the regulatory requirements that employers need to be aware of. If a WorkSafe Inspector visits the employer the Inspector may inspect or seek compliance with only some of the issues that have been assessed. It is in the employer's interests to know and identify all of the things that are legally expected of them.

Contents

Building Blocks for OHS

This first section looks at some important but simple things that an employer should have in place as part of managing their OHS responsibilities.

OHS Policies and Procedures

Do you have a documented OHS Policy that has been authorised by your organisation that clearly states health and safety objectives?

An OHS policy clearly outlines in writing the commitment and intent of the business to comply with the OHS Act and Regulations. It also commits an employer to involve employees in the processes that need to be undertaken to comply with the regulations.

There is no specific legal requirement to have an OHS policy however WorkSafe and the public view businesses that have an OHS policy favourably in general i.e. it is a good business practice. The most important people to give an OHS policy to are your employees. An OHS policy should be posted in a prominent position in the workplace in the main office and lunch area. The most important thing that an OHS policy does is that it clearly demonstrates the commitment and intent of the business towards OHS.

Have you developed health and safety policies and procedures for specific health and safety matters?

It is advisable to have policies and procedures for specific OHS issues to clearly communicate your commitment and intent and position on important OHS issues.

Policies and procedures can be obtained from a range of sources including industry associations, the internet, or you can create your own. It is important that businesses adhere to the policies and procedures that are implemented into the workplace. Policies should be developed and/or implemented in consultation with your employees and reviewed at least bi-annually.

Specific policies should outline the business' intent and position on the relevant subject, as well as describing the manner in which compliance will be achieved.

There are two rules for OHS policies and procedures:

- you have to ensure that your company does what they say you are going to do; and
- except when inducting new employees or sub-subcontractors, it is not necessary to get employees to sign off on policies that outline the company's commitment and intent.

Suggested policies, for which examples are provided with this handbook include Issue Resolution, Bullying, Sexual Harassment, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Drugs and Alcohol, and UV.

Allocation of responsibilities for management

Has a management OHS Representative been appointed to oversee OHS matters?

Generally in small businesses the management representative is the business owner. In larger businesses the task may be delegated to a senior manager e.g. the farm manager.

If so, have they been trained in their role and responsibilities?

It is highly recommended that the management representative undertake at least the same 5 day OHS training course as is provided for OHS representatives. Many businesses have decided to put managers and supervisors through Certificate IV in OHS and this course is today recognised as a bench mark for competent safety persons within business.

The best time to tackle your OHS responsibilities is immediately after the individual has attended a training course. The work which needs to be undertaken is largely administrative in nature and people that attend training courses often want to return to their normal work i.e. hands on the tools. It is important to ensure that the knowledge acquired during the training is put to use effectively.

Languages

Is all health and safety information available to all non-English speaking employees?

In some sectors of the farming industry seasonal workers and overseas labour are often derived from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Where there are non-English speaking persons employed in the business all safety information must be provided in languages that are appropriate. Employees with literacy deficiencies may also need to have information passed onto them by means other than in writing.

It may be necessary to have safety documentation translated into languages other than English by using a translating service (there are a number of free translating services on line).

It may also be necessary to have a worker that is capable of translating to communicate safety messages.

Consultation

Do you regularly consult your employees on OHS issues?

(Evidence of consultation could include meeting minutes, preferable, or diary notes of the issues that were discussed and a written record of the agreed outcomes.)

Under the OHS Act 2004, employers have a duty to consult with their employees on health and safety matters.

Consultation should not only be about asking the employees if there are any problems. Employers should regularly go to their employees with health and safety issues clearly on the agenda. Having OHS on the agenda creates an environment in which employees know that the employer is serious about their safety and take greater ownership and involvement in safety in the workplace.

Under the 2004 Act, employers must consult their employees when:

- Identifying or assessing hazards or risks
- Making decisions on how to control risks
- Making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for employee welfare e.g. dining facilities, change rooms or toilets
- Making decisions about procedures to:
  - resolve health and safety issues (issue resolution)
  - consult with employees on health and safety issues
  - monitor employees' health and workplace conditions
  - provide information and training
- Determining the membership of any health and safety committee, this includes all health and safety committees, not just those which must be established under the Act
- Proposing changes that may affect the health and safety of employees to:
  - the workplace
  - plant, substances and other things used in the workplace
  - the work performed at the workplace.
- The Act requires the employer to:
  - Share information with employees about the matter on which the employer is required to consult;
  - Give employees a reasonable opportunity to express views about the matter; and
  - Take those views into account.

Many farm employers address OHS issues at toolbox meetings, staff meetings or at morning tea breaks. It is important that records are kept of issues that are raised. These records could end up being an important element of an employer's defence in the event of a workplace accident. It is recommended that diary notes be kept, as a minimum, as evidence of OHS issues that are raised.

When and how to consult

The duty to consult is not meant to be onerous or time-consuming. Consultation should, and typically does, take place as often as is necessary however it is recommended that OHS should be formally 'on the agenda' at least once per month (i.e. at a minimum).

Workers can be consulted in a variety of ways. However, one of the most effective means of consultation is through toolbox meetings. These meetings must invite worker participation and take account of feedback from workers.

It is important that records are kept of the issues that are discussed, primarily as evidence of consultation having taken place but also to help keep track of any issues raised that need following up. Meeting minutes can be as brief as recording the names of attendees and dot pointing the topics discussed.

Meeting the duty to consult in small workplaces

Some worksites may only ever have three to four workers on site at any one time.

Even so, employers should still engage in the practice of having toolbox meetings on site irrespective of the number of persons present. OHS Notice Board and Intranet pages are also useful resources to communicate safety information but they do not suffice for the employers' duty to consult.

What to talk about

As well as talking about site related safety issues there are many subjects that affect the health and safety of all persons working in the industry that farmers should consult their workers about.

OHS policies and procedures are very useful tools for facilitating discussion with workers on site about matters that affect their safety.

It is clearly far more preferable for an employer to talk to a group of workers about issues such as 'Drugs & Alcohol" or "Personal Protective Equipment", by issuing a policy, than it is to have to deal with these issues when something goes wrong.

Farmers will generally talk to their workers about day to day safety issues every day, but using OHS policies periodically opens up discussions that may otherwise never be discussed. For example, talking to workers about UV exposure and protection is an extremely useful exercise around the time of the year when the weather is getting warmer (e.g. September).

A drug and alcohol policy could be issued at any time of the year but strategically a good time might be around the start of November (spring racing carnival) or December (festive season).

Employers are encouraged to take a systematic approach to OHS consultation and to use their toolbox meetings to 'continuously improve' their OHS capability. You don't just issue a UV policy once, you re-issue it every year to again make clear your policy, commitment and intent. At times it may be necessary to re-issue policies more often should issues need to be reiterated more often.

Consultation using OHS policies and procedures can ensure that everyone on site knows and understands the issues, but also how those issues will be managed in the event that there are breaches.

Where there are health and safety representatives, consultation is required to go through these persons. (More information about health and safety representatives is available in Appendix 1 of this handbook.)

Achieving a good OHS culture

A farmer that engages and involves their employees and subcontractors in health and safety is more likely to achieve a good safety culture in their business. A culture where, through repetition and ongoing monitoring and supervision, combined with safe work practices employees and subcontractors clearly know and understand what is expected.

Issue Resolution

Do you have a system in place for OHS issues to be raised and resolved?

Most employers know that if there is a health and safety issue in the workplace that their employees can come to them to talk about the issue at any time. Occasionally however an issue may not be resolved to the satisfaction of the employee/s.

Under the OHS Act 2004 employers are permitted to resolve health and safety issues which arise in accordance with a procedure which has been agreed to within the workplace. *Where no such agreed procedure exists the procedure which is prescribed in the OHS Issue Resolution Regulations 2017 applies.*

It is to an employer's advantage to have a procedure in their workplace which ensures that attempts are made to resolve issues without the need for external intervention, Unions or WorkSafe.

Such a procedure should identify the person that is ultimately responsible for resolving OHS issues within the workplace; the management person that is identified in this procedure must have an adequate level of seniority and 'competency' to deal with issues. For the purposes of issue resolution WorkSafe Victoria has defined competency as having knowledge of the Act and Regulations and the requirements for issue resolution. This level of competency is obtained by completing a suitable course for Managers and Supervisors. If the employer does not possess this level of knowledge they are expected to know where they can acquire this knowledge (e.g. through their industry association – the VFF).

The procedure should specify that if the issue cannot be resolved the employee/s may call on WorkSafe for assistance. This is permissible under the OHS Act and an employer cannot take action against an employee for taking such action.

Additionally, to discriminate against a person that acts in the role of a HSR who raises a health and safety issue or assists a WorkSafe Inspector, is an offence under the Act. The onus to prove that discrimination did not occur rests with the employer.

Deferring to the issue resolution procedure can potentially protect an employer from the risks of claims of discrimination.

- **Health and safety Representatives** (see appendix 1)
- **Union Right of Entry** (see Appendix 2)

Induction, Training and Supervision

Do all new employees and subcontractors undertake an OHS induction before commencing employment at your workplace?

Induction includes instruction on first aid and emergency procedures, safe operating procedures, policies and procedures, procedures for reporting of injuries and incidents.

The duration of such an induction will vary depending upon the size and complexity of the workplace and the degree to which unusual hazards or risks are present.

An induction checklist should be developed in consultation with employees working in the workplace. This is a good exercise to implement in the early stages of your OHS development as it actively involves your employees and gets them thinking and talking about safety.

In a business, new employees, upon commencement of employment, should be given an induction checklist along with their other paperwork e.g. tax forms, banking details forms etc.

Induction into the workplace is the first, and one of the most important, forms of training that an employee receives. The induction checklist should include procedural items such as policies and procedures as well as physical aspects of the workplace e.g. first aid kits, PPE, animal handling procedures, emergency procedures.

Are employee skill levels and training needs reviewed to ensure that they are kept up to date with changes in equipment and procedures within the workplace?

With the farming industry constantly changing it is important that employee skill levels are maintained. Many of the technological advancements can impact on safety. It is specifically an employer's duty to provide adequate training and instruction for employees.

It is also important to ensure that employees are trained when new equipment is introduced into the workplace. Often the supplier of the equipment is able to provide training.

Maintaining training records (e.g. a training matrix or spreadsheet) for all workers helps to manage who has had the training and who hasn't.

Do you consider safe systems of work and provide instruction or where necessary documented procedures?

Safe systems of work consider what the job entails, what machinery and tools will be used, what the environment is where the job will be undertaken and the level of skill and experience of those undertaking the job and then details the way the work will be done, by who, and who will oversee the work. Planning of the job will include what steps will eliminate any known risks and where this can't occur how the job will be done using known controls eg using PPE when spraying chemicals. Often procedures are documented to detail these jobs so that workers involved can be provided with instruction and training and the job can be conducted efficiently and safely. Various terms are used for these procedures – safe operating procedures (usually around the use of farm machinery) and safe work procedures (also sometimes call safe work method statements) – detailing the way the job is done.

Do you provide adequate supervision for your workers? Do you keep records?

All workers, but particularly new and young workers need close supervision once they have been trained. After a time of repeating the work they will gain the skills and experience required to be deemed competent. When providing supervision be sure to acknowledge when safe working practices are followed as well as taking a worker aside and having a chat for when its warranted. If serious actions occur which are contrary to the way a worker has been trained and they have the potential to cause serious injury to the worker or other workers then it is recommended that appropriate disciplinary processes should be followed (e.g the worker is given a formal warning). VFF members should avail themselves of the workplace relations team prior to taking this step.

Simple records like diary entries should be kept to show day to day supervision is being done, while formal records are required when safety training requirements are deliberately ignored.

Certification, Licensing and Qualifications

Do you ask workers and subcontractors for proof of their competency?

For certain high-risk activities Victorian OHS Laws require that before workers undertake these activities that the workers:

- Hold the required WorkSafe License for High Risk Work,
- Hold a trade license from the appropriate state authority,
- Can demonstrate competency in the use of particular plant.

Licences for High Risk Work are required for some types of work common to the farming industry - forklift operation and the operation of telehandlers.

High Risk Work Licenses have to be renewed once every 5 years. Licenses are able to be renewed at Australia Post Offices. Persons will not be required to have their competency re-assessed. A license renewal fee will be applicable.

If a person does not renew their license within the nominal expiry period they will need to be retrained.

Forklift Operators

The operation of any size of standard forklift requires the operator to hold a certificate of competency class LF.

Tele-handler Operators

This type of equipment is not classified as a forklift, rather as multi-purpose, non-slewing, telescopic boom crane able to be used with several different types of boom attachments. Operators are required to hold a high risk work license for:

- Non-slewing type machines with a capacity over 3 tonne (class CN or any slewing mobile crane class)
- Slewing type machines (class C2 or any other slewing mobile crane class)

Do you record their details in a register?

Before they start working on your farm, record details of the registrations, certificates, licences and qualification cards of workers and subcontractors. Keep your records up to date and easy to access so you can immediately make them available to your supervisors and leading hands.

Do you ensure that trainees remain under adequate supervision?

Unlicensed trainees need to be under the supervision of a licensed person, who has been authorised by the employer to act as supervisor. You should make sure that a training log book is issued to the trainee and is being completed and signed off by the supervisor.

Toolbox Meeting Script No. 1

How to introduce an OHS Policy, Issue Resolution Procedure, induction procedures and license checks

To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicably, that he meets his duty under the OHS Act 2004 to consult with workers about matters that affect their safety Phillip from Philosophical Farms has decided to conduct monthly OHS toolbox meetings on his farm.

Phil knows that safety is discussed on a routine basis but that those discussions generally relate to the work that is being performed at that time. Phil has strategically planned to conduct his toolbox meetings to compliment the day to day discussions and to properly utilise his OHS systems.

Phil has a permanent workforce of just a few employees but during various times of the year the number of workers present on his farm can vary significantly as a lot of the work is undertaken by subcontractors. Phil commits to undertaking toolbox meetings irrespective of the number of workers on site.

NOTE: High Risk Work Licenses are required for the operation of forklifts and telehandlers. WorkSafe issued High Risk Work Licenses are valid for 5 years. It is an offence for an employer to allow a person to perform any of the above mentioned types of work without an appropriate, up to date, High Risk Work License.

Phil writes down the details of each worker's High Risk Work Licenses and Drivers Licenses for those workers that have them.

The script

"Gather round everyone, pull up a chair or a trestle and let's have a sit down for 5-10 minutes. We're going to have a toolbox meeting"

Once the workers have settled down Phil hands over a copy of his company's OHS Policy, which is on his company letterhead clearly signed and dated.

"Here is my OHS policy. What that document tells you is that I am fair dinkum about your safety.... not that you ever had any reason to doubt that, but here in just a few words is a document that clearly tells you that."

Before anyone interjects Phil continues "And in terms of being serious about safety, the law requires that I consult with you about health and safety and that is what I will be doing on our property in future. I know that we will talk about safety from day to day but in future, probably about once a month or so, we will also take 5-10 minutes to sit down and talk about safety more formally".

Once Phil' OHS policy has been handed around and everyone has had a chance to look at it Phil then hands around a copy of his OHS Issue Resolution Procedure. The procedure details the manner in which disputes or differences on health and safety will be resolved on Phil's property.

When we have these meetings, or even from day to day, should any sort of difference arise on any health and safety issues this document outlines how we will work through those differences. The procedure outlines the various steps that we will follow, including involving the (Refer to external OHS resources such as industry association) with the necessary expertise to assist if necessary. If, after following this procedure, the issues still cannot be resolved then it will be open to anyone to call for a WorkSafe Inspector to attend the workplace to assist."

"Are you ok with that procedure?" Phil asks. On seeing that the workers at the farm have acknowledged the procedure Phil states "thanks, then that is how it's done"

Phil then turns his mind to Induction training for new employees and contractors.

"I am genuinely committed to making sure that our workplace is safe. If you started here tomorrow as a new employee what would you have liked to have been shown from a health and safety point of view? I would love to hear your thoughts"

Phil writes down the suggestions for inclusion in his induction checklist for new employees.

Phil also has a desire to make sure that on the off-chance that he has to get any worker on his farm to perform high risk work that they have the appropriate WorkSafe issued photo id High Risk Work License. "While we are checking your High Risk Work Licenses, just in case we need to get you to jump onto the forklift or the telehandler we will do you a favour as well and check that your licenses are up to date".

"And before you go, I may also need you to drive the company ute into town from time to time and so I also need to ensure that you are properly licensed. Could you also please show me your driver's licenses after this meeting so that I know who I can authorise to drive our vehicles?"

How does Phil record the toolbox meeting?

Phil records his toolbox meeting on his Toolbox Meeting template. Phil's records reflect the issues that he discussed and the names of those that were present on site during those discussions.

Note: An employer can get workers to sign off to indicate that they were present or they can simply record the names themselves. It does not matter how the names are recorded.

A sample of the minutes from this meeting are attached.

What does Phil do next?

Phil takes the OHS Policy, the OHS Issue Resolution Procedure and the minutes from the meetings and inserts them into his OHS folder in his office (or in an OHS folder on his computer). For Phil this material constitutes a significant portion of his OHS system. The material that he has collated demonstrates that he has been proactive in engaging with his employees and subcontractors and consulting with them about matters that affect their safety.

Record of OHS Toolbox Meeting

Farm name:
123 Hort Lane, Livestockton

Meeting date:
13 July 2021

Work group:

Distribution:
☐ Lunchroom Notice Board

Meeting conducted by:
Phil, Director of Philosophical Farms

Attendance - all participants to be listed:
Tom Jones
Dick Tracey
Harriet Belafonte
Cecilia Rubblestone

Main subject of meeting:
Issued OHS Policy and Issue Resolution Procedure

Main issues covered:
☑ Issued OHS Policy
☑ Issued OHS Issue Resolution Procedure
☑ Spoke with workers about Induction process for new employees
☑ Spoke with workers about High Risk Work Licenses and Drivers Licenses
☑ Sough employee input on induction process.

Other issues raised:
Complaints about the state of the first aid kits – no band aids left. Reminded workers that they should not wait for toolbox meeting to raise such issues.

Agreed actions:
Take first aid kit to local pharmacy to be restocked.

Notes:

Public Safety and First Aid

Public Safety

Do you ensure that the farm remains secure?

Children and the general public need to be protected from wandering into danger on farm properties. Boundary fencing to separate the home from the work areas is particularly important.

The mix of home, work and recreation on a farm creates a complex risk environment. It is not always possible to remove the risk, but adults must limit access to hazards for young family members, as well as farm visitors.

Fencing and signage to keep members of the public out of the property are a normal feature of farming properties. Fencing to separate the home from the workplace is important to ensure that children and visitors are separated from the hazards (e.g. moving tractors).

Signage to direct people to the main office is advisable so as to ensure that people do not wander around unsupervised.

Always ensure that visitors are escorted and supervised.

Visitor sign in books, or QR Codes to record entry onto the farm, are certainly worth consideration.

First Aid

Do you have a First Aid Kit(s) in your workplace?

A First Aid kit should be located in a prominent position in every workplace. The number of kits in the workplace generally depends on the size and layout of the workplace.

Ideally kits should be placed on a wall in a prominent position in the workplace e.g. in the workshop or the lunchroom. If you store the kit behind closed doors in a storage room or in a cupboard you may need to place signage to advise employees of its presence.

In addition to the First Aid Kit in the office/workshop it is also highly recommended that smaller portable (i.e. padded bag type) First Aid kits should also be available in work vehicles.

Has an employee been trained in First Aid (Level 2 recommended)?

It is highly advisable to have a person that is trained to handle the (serious) incidents that might occur. Level 2 First Aid is considered to be the preferable standard of training. Many people that undertake First Aid courses find them invaluable in their day-to-day activities, including when they are away from the workplace.

Note that Level 2 First Aid certificates are valid for 3 years from the date of issue.

Do you store any medications in your First Aid cupboard e.g. Panadol?

Analgesics e.g. paracetamol, come under the category of medication and are not considered a first aid item. WorkSafe's opinion is that workplace first aid kits should not include medications of any type, including painkillers. "First aid" is defined as the provision of emergency treatment and life support for people suffering injury or illness. The dispensing of medication would generally not fall within this definition. A major concern with dispensing medication is that a recipient may suffer an allergic reaction. This is possible, even with common medications such as paracetamol or aspirin. Many people are intolerant to such substances.

First Aiders are people who undertake the initial treatment of people suffering injury or illness at work. The Compliance Code for First Aid in the Workplace specifies that first aiders should not be responsible for on-going medical care. These people are trained to administer first aid only, not to make decisions on what medication should be given, and headache tablets, paracetamol etc. come under the category of medication.

Do you or anyone in your organisation conduct periodic checks of the contents of your First Aid kits/cupboards i.e. to replenish stock and ensure that contents have not expired?

First Aid kits should be checked regularly to ensure that contents e.g. saline solution, have not passed their use by dates and stock e.g. of band aids is adequate and that medications have not been placed into the kit.

A list of contents for different sized first aid kits can be found here (link to St John's). St John's Ambulance also provides a service where they will come out to farms to check and stock kits. Some local pharmacies will also assist to restock first aid kits.

St John Ambulance provide a First Aid Kit restocking service which is available to all farmers. Simply call 1300 STJOHN

Accident/Incident Reporting

Is there an 'If you are injured poster' displayed in the workplace?

Employers (once taking out a WorkCover insurance policy) are required to display an 'If you are injured poster' in their workplace under the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (WIRC) 2013.

The poster advises workers of their rights to be able to make a workers compensation claim and includes the contact details of the employer's WorkCover Agent.

Does a Register of Injuries book exist in the workplace?

Employers (once taking out a WorkCover insurance policy) are required under the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (WIRC) 2013 to have a register of injuries book in their workplace. The current format for register of injuries books provides for triplicate copies of the form the employee fills out to record their injury detail.

Employers should advise their employees of the procedures for reporting injuries and the location of the register. Register of injuries books are available through your WorkCover Agent or at Officeworks.

https://www.officeworks.com.au/shop/officeworks/p/zions-workcover-register-of-injuries-victoria-book-ziroid

Do employees receive a copy of the injury details that they enter into the Register of Injuries book?

The register of injuries book provides for triplicate copies of worker's entries. One of these copies is for the worker making the entry. Employers are legally required to provide acknowledgement of the giving of a notice of injury to an employee. Ensuring that the employee takes their copy of the form meets this requirement

Have you properly investigated the accident or incident?

Make sure you properly investigate to find out the cause of the accident or incident. Do not assume it was just one of those things.

Have you made the necessary improvements to avoid repeat accidents and/or incidents?

Do not ignore the lessons you can learn from investigating accidents and incidents. Make the necessary changes before a repetition occurs.

Managers/supervisors should be trained to undertake an investigation. Suitable investigation forms should be available to use.

Serious Incident Reporting, Recording and Investigation

Are you aware of the requirement to notify WorkSafe of serious 'notifiable' incidents?

Under the OHS Act 2004 notification is required immediately where an incident at a workplace or equipment site results in:

- Death
- Medical treatment within 48 hours following exposure to a substance
- Immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital
- Immediate treatment for amputation, serious head injury, serious eye injury, separation of skin from underlying tissue e.g. de-gloving or scalping, electric shock, spinal injury, loss of bodily function, including loss of consciousness, serious laceration
- Situations that seriously endanger the health and safety of people in the immediate vicinity also require WorkSafe notification. Such dangerous occurrences include:
- Collapse, overturning, failure or malfunction of, or damage to, certain items of plant e.g. collapse of a crane
- Collapse of part of a building or structure
- Implosion, explosion or fire
- Escape, spillage or leakage of substances under the Dangerous Goods Act 1985
- Objects or substances falling from a height
- Occurrences of workers reporting Covid-19

It is important to note that it is WorkSafe that needs to be notified, not the WorkCover Agent.

Employers must notify WorkSafe in the event of any of the above occurring in their workplace. Notifying WorkSafe of a "notifiable" incident is not something that an employer should be overly concerned about. WorkSafe's primary concern is safety. In the first instance WorkSafe will want to know what happened and will seek assurances that the hazard has been addressed and that no other employees are at risk.

Failure to notify WorkSafe is a breach of the Act, which can lead to fines.

Note that notification is to WorkSafe - not the WorkCover Agent for the purposes of a WorkCover claim which may also need to be done.

The phone number to notify WorkSafe of notifiable incidents is 132 360.

Are you aware of the requirement to preserve the scene of a notifiable incident?

Under the OHS Act 2004, an employer is required to preserve the scene of a notifiable incident until such time as they are given approval by a WorkSafe Inspector to resume normal work activities. An Inspector will generally attend the scene of a notifiable incident as quickly as possible.

Effort can be taken to ensure that an injured worker is removed from the accident scene for treatment however once this occurs the accident scene must remain undisturbed until such time as an inspector has confirmed that it is ok. Failure to preserve the scene of a notifiable incident is an offence under the Act.

Emergency Planning

Are emergency procedures documented?

Emergency procedures are an important safety element for your workplace as fire, flood or other emergency can present an immediate risk to everyone in the workplace. Emergency procedures can consist of but are not limited to, the following three single paged items:

- A plan (map) of the farm and farm buildings detailing the location of fire extinguishers, hose reels, first aid kits, emergency exits and the assembly area.
- Stickers for icons e.g. fire extinguishers, for the floor plan are available here: https://www.safetysigns.com.au/products/evacuation-plan-stickers?variant=20607804506171
- A list of emergency contact phone numbers not limited to "000" but including – names and contact numbers of first aiders, fire warden/s, local numbers for the Authorities; local medical clinics and hospitals; gas, electricity and water suppliers.
- A basic set of instructions for what to do in the event of an emergency

These items should be displayed in prominent positions in the workplace for employees and customers to see – e.g. the lunchroom and/or the main entrance. A copy should also be provided to subcontractors at induction.

Have employees received training in emergency procedures appropriate to their allocated emergency responsibilities and the degree of risk?

There are a number of potential fire risks that can arise on farms. There are a range of flammable materials used in the workplace including chemicals, solvents and acetylene gear, there is potential for a farm vehicle to catch fire and there also may be the risk of a bush or grass fire.

Whilst many people think it is not that hard to use a fire extinguisher, there are techniques that need to be followed to ensure that they are used properly and effectively. It is also advisable to have someone in the workplace that can coordinate an emergency situation. It is advisable to have someone in the workplace that is trained in fire safety - Fire Warden Training.

There are a number of providers of Fire Warden Courses, including the Fire Rescue Victoria and the CFA.

In regional areas many farm workers also volunteer for the Country Fire authority (CFA) and given they have already been trained may also be willing to fill the role of fire warden.

Are emergency procedures regularly rehearsed and reviewed?

Employers should practice their emergency procedures at least annually. Employers sometimes need to be creative in the manner that they rehearse their procedures. The MFB and CFA are sometimes able to assist employers in this area and provide a detailed report for a reasonably nominal fee. It is important that a record is kept of any practice of emergency procedures.

The Authorities that deal with the aftermath of fires in workplaces i.e. WorkSafe, Police, FRV/CFA, and the Coroner, take fire risks very seriously because fire presents an immediate risk to everyone in the workplace. It is important that an employer is able to demonstrate that they are properly prepared and that their employees were properly trained and instructed in the company's emergency procedures.

Are regular inspections, testing and maintenance carried out on all emergency equipment, exit signs and alarm systems?

Employers are required to have emergency equipment, exit signs and alarm systems inspected, tested and maintained at least every six months. For some types of fire extinguisher there may be a need for it to be emptied and refilled at intervals between 3-5 years.

The tags on the equipment should be stamped as evidence that the equipment has been inspected and serviced. In metropolitan areas this service is normally provided by subcontractors, or by the CFA in rural areas.

Employers should never assume that this testing will occur routinely. Employer's should diarise and regularly check the tags on fire-fighting equipment monitor the frequency of the testing.

Toolbox Meeting Script No. 2

How to talk to workers about emergency procedures and bullying

Note: Employers are required under the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 to maintain a Register of Injury Book in the workplace. Farmers should maintain a Register at the same location as their First Aid facilities (e.g. First Aid room, workshop, lunch room).

Sample script

"Gather round everyone, its tool box meeting time!" Phil shouts.

"Here are the emergency procedures for our Farm," Phil states as he hands around a plan of the property.

"On the emergency plan you will see the location of the fire extinguisher(s) and the first aid facilities. We also carry fire extinguishers and first aid kits on our farm machinery and work vehicles."

"X marks the spot, that's the location of the evacuation area. If the place goes up in a blaze of glory, get the hell out," Phil says while pointing to the power pole located adjacent to the front driveway.

Note- The assembly area should be located in an area where it will not obstruct the access of emergency services. Workers should also be advised that the designated assembly area would not apply in the case of a large fire. The evacuation area is intended to take people away from the immediate exposure to a building (e.g. farm shed/house).

"Here are the emergency contact phone numbers and some basic instructions on what to do in an emergency situation."

Phil then moved on to the next subject which was the reporting of accidents and incidents on site.

"Here is my Register of Injury Book," Phil advised, holding up the Register of Injury Book that he had obtained through his WorkCover Agent/Officeworks."

"Now I know that you are unlikely to fill this book out for 'the band aid job', but let's be absolutely clear: Any sort of off-site medical attention (e.g. doctor or hospital) or any sort of sprain or strain type injury (e.g. back, shoulder, neck) must go down here in the book."

"Before you go, I was listening to you two [Phil points the finger towards two workers sitting beside each other] on Monday morning having a bit of argy-bargy about the footy scores. And during the conversation I heard you [pointing the finger] call him a rabid feral Collingwood supporter," the smile rising on his face as his employees realise that he is clearly talking with tongue firmly planted in his cheek.

"That's just terrible, that's just wrong (all Collingwood supporters are wonderful)…. Now I am only joking with you but if ever there is an incidence of inappropriate social conduct in my workplace, please refer to this, my bullying and harassment policies."

Suddenly the workers realise the seriousness of the subject that Phil is talking about. "If anyone ever conducts themselves in an inappropriate social manner this is how I will deal with it." Phil states.

"Do you understand why this is important? Can you imagine how you would feel if you were subjected to inappropriate behaviour? I welcome your feedback and any suggestions that you can make to help me to ensure that this policy works effectively.

How does Phil record the toolbox meeting?

Phil records his toolbox meeting in his Toolbox Meeting template. Phil's records reflect the issues that he discussed and the names of those that were present during those discussions.

Note: An employer can get workers to sign off to indicate that they were present or they can simply record the names themselves. It does not matter how the names are recorded.

A sample of the minutes from this meeting are attached.

What does Phil do next?

Phil takes the Bullying and Harassment Policy and the minutes from the meetings and inserts them into his OHS folder in his office/computer. For Phil this material constitutes a significant portion of his growing OHS system. The material that he has collated demonstrates that he has been proactive in engaging with his employees and subcontractors and consulting with them about matters that affect their safety.

Record of OHS Toolbox Meeting

Farm name:
123 Hort Lane, Livestockton

Meeting date:
Wednesday, 15 August 2021

Work group:

Distribution:
☐ Workers Notice Board

Meeting conducted by:
Phil, Director of Philosophical Farms

Attendance - all participants to be listed:
Tom Jones
Dick Tracey
Harriet Belafonte
Cecilia Rubblestone

Main subject of meeting:
Emergency procedures, reporting of accidents and issued bullying and harassment policy.

Main issues covered:
☑ Emergency procedures
☑ Reporting of accidents and incidents
☑ First Aid and Fire Equipment
☑ Completion of the Register of Injuries Book
☑ Issued bullying and harassment policies

Other issues raised:
Concern about extension leads being damaged

Agreed actions:
New extension leads to be obtained.

Notes:

Managing Subcontractors

Have you requested the public liability and workers compensation insurance details of subcontractors that undertake work for you?

Public Liability – Employers do not want to be deemed liable for accidents that are caused by subcontractors that work in your workplace. If an accident happens in your workplace the injured party will potentially pursue action against your business simply because the accident happened in your workplace.

If an employee lodges a WorkCover claim against your business for an injury that arises from the activities performed by a subcontractor, your WorkCover Agent may be able to recover the costs of the claim from the subcontractor's public liability insurance. It is highly recommended that you have a copy of all subcontractors' public liability insurance details to protect your business.

In certain instances subcontractors can also claim against an employer's WorkCover insurance policy, generally if they conduct regular or sustained periods of work. It is commonplace for employers to ask subcontractors to verify that they have OHS systems in place. Employers should not be reluctant in asking subcontractors to hand over copies of their insurance details. It is highly recommended that you have a copy of subcontractors' public liability and WorkCover insurance details to protect your business.

Have subcontractors provided safety documentation to demonstrate their capacity to undertake their work safely?

Under the OHS Act 2004, an employer has the same duty of care to subcontractors as they do their own employees, particularly for things that the employer has control over.

When engaging subcontractors, particularly for high risk activities such as performing work at heights, an employer should seek documentation from the subcontractor, in the form of a risk assessment or Job Safety Analysis (JSA) which clearly identifies the manner in which the activity will be performed safely.

Employers cannot contract out their OHS responsibilities. A letter stating that the subcontractor accepts full responsibility and liability for any accidents that occur will not change the fact that the employer has control of the workplace and therefore the activities that go on within it.

Employers should seek documentation from subcontractors that clearly identifies how the subcontractor will perform their work in a safe manner. A risk assessment/JSA should clearly identify that the subcontractor has identified and assessed the hazards associated with the work they are about to perform and that they have appropriate controls in place.

Are subcontractors bringing plant and equipment on site which has been serviced and maintained? Are they using competent operators for this machinery?

Employers should require subcontractors to ensure that farm machinery brought on site is serviced and maintained and fit for purpose. They should also seek assurances from the subcontractor that the operators are competent.

Complying with OHS Laws and Regulations

The legislative framework

This section deals with the legislative and regulatory requirements that employers need to be aware of and provides some scope and direction as to how compliance with these laws can be achieved.

The OHS Act 2004 is the governing piece of legislation for OHS in Victoria. Essentially, the Act requires employers to provide a safe place and safe systems of work for their employees and to provide them with adequate training, instruction and supervision to enable them to work safely. The Act does not deal with specific issues such as scaffolding or the use of cranes. These items, and many others, are covered in greater detail in the Regulations. In Victoria there are Regulations for things such as plant, chemical safety/hazardous substances, noise, manual handling and more.

Supporting the Act and the Regulations are WorkSafe Position Statements - Issued under Section 12 of the Act, Compliance Codes and other Guidance material produced by WorkSafe Victoria. All of this material and other guidance material produced by Industry fall into the category of state of knowledge for employers to consider in managing health and safety in their workplace.

Duties of employers under the Victorian OHS Act 2004

An employer must so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain for employees and independent contractors engaged by the employer, a working environment that is safe and without risks to health by:

- providing and/or maintaining plant or systems of work that are safe and without risks to health;
- making arrangements for ensuring safety and the absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage or transport of plant or substances e.g. toxic chemicals, dusts, and fibres;
- maintaining workplaces under their management and control in a condition that is safe and without risks to health e.g. controlling noise, keeping farm tracks in good condition;
- providing adequate facilities for the welfare of employees at any workplace under their management and control e.g. toilets and amenities areas;
- providing employees with information, instruction, training or supervision as required to enable them to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health.

An employer must also:

- monitor the health of employees and conditions at any workplace under their management and control; and provide information to them, in such other languages as appropriate, concerning health and safety at the workplace, including the names of persons to whom an employee may make an enquiry or complaint about health and safety;
- keep information and records relating to the health and safety of employees;
- employ or engage persons who are suitably qualified in OHS to provide advice to the employer concerning the health and safety of employees;
- ensure that members of the public are not exposed to risks to health or safety arising from their business activities.

WorkSafe position statements on reasonably practicable and hazard identification and management of risks.

WorkSafe have released a Section 12 Ruling, termed a position statement, on the subjects of “Reasonably Practicable” and “Hazard identification and the Management of Risks in Workplaces”.

These documents outline that it is WorkSafe’s opinion that, in order to comply with the duties outlined in the Act and the Regulations, employers must be proactive in identifying hazards and risks in the workplace. The documents further outline WorkSafe’s opinion that, in order to meet the primary duty to eliminate or reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable, an employer should undertake a process of risk assessment.

Finding hazards and investigating/analysing risks does not always require a formal process. Some hazards and risks are immediately obvious or are known from experience. A formal process leads to more predictable outcomes and should be used when hazards or risks are not immediately obvious or they are part of complex work processes. It is important that these things are done as comprehensively as needed to match the situation.

Risk Assessment

Do you understand the concept of risk assessment?

Under the OHS Act in Victoria, employers are required to eliminate the risks in their workplace and if the risks cannot be eliminated, to reduce the risks to the extent that is reasonably practicable. Risk assessment is a process of identifying, assessing and controlling the risks in the workplace. This process is also known as risk management. In some of their publications WorkSafe express the process as "Find it, Assess it, Fix it", which essentially means the same thing.

Many employers would suggest that they always immediately address hazards that arise in the workplace e.g. removing a faulty piece of equipment. This is excellent, but it is also reactive. Risk assessments are performed to address hazards before they occur and focus on issues that employers do not readily consider in their normal day to day activities, such as the potential for sprains and strain/manual handling and the safe use of chemicals.

Documented risk assessments provide clear evidence that an employer has attempted to manage their OHS responsibilities and to comply with the Act and the Regulations. Compliance will ultimately be dependent on the implementation of risk controls. In performing risk assessments an employer looks for things that can go wrong before they go wrong – this is proactive OHS.

Do you involve your employees in the process of identifying, assessing and controlling risks in your workplace?

Under the OHS Act 2004 employers are required to consult with their employees when identifying and assessing risks and determining controls for those risks. Each of the Regulations also requires employers to consult and involve their employees, or the elected health and safety representative, in the risk management process. Employees are often the best source of information on the types of risk in the workplace and the controls that can be used.

Controlling risks in the workplace

Do you follow the "Hierarchy of Control" when controlling risks in your workplace?

Under the OHS legislation, you are required to introduce new control measures to eliminate the risk, or if that is not practicable, to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable, if the current measures are found to be inadequate and there is a likelihood that injury, illness or disease will result from a particular situation.

The term 'reasonably practicable' has a particular meaning under the OHS Act 2004. It means practicable having regard to:

- the likelihood of the hazard or risk concerned eventuating;
- the degree of harm that would result if the hazard or risk eventuated;
- what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or risk and any ways of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk;
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard or risk;
- the cost of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk.

The risk control process should be carried out in consultation with the relevant health and safety representatives and employees.

In identifying new risk control measures, the most effective form of control measures is to eliminate the risk e.g. by eliminating the process. If that is not practicable you need to identify effective measures to reduce the risk. The OHS legislation specifies that you must not depend solely on the use of administrative controls or personal protective equipment to reduce the risk unless you have established that the following are not practicable measures:

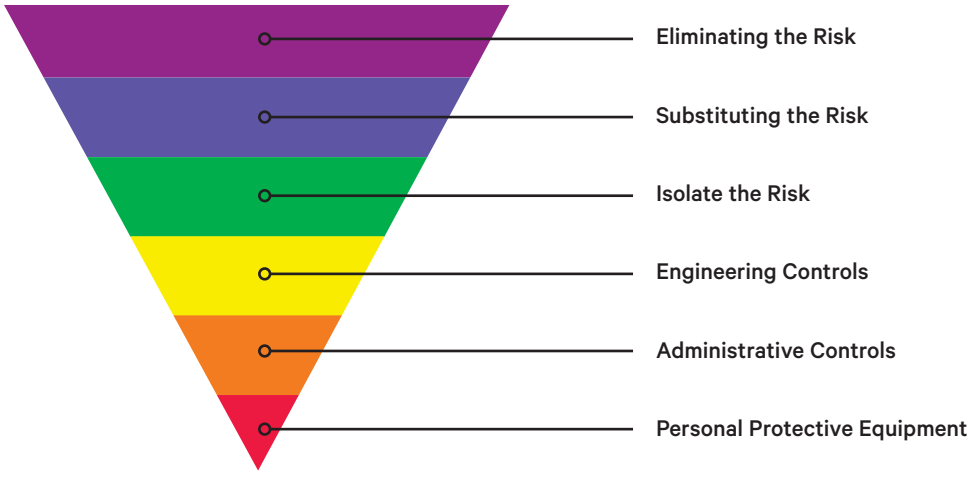
- substituting the plant or substance with another one that is less hazardous
- isolating people from the source of exposure
- using engineering controls e.g. modifying the design of the workplace or plant, or environmental conditions
- changing the objects used in the task involving manual handling
- using mechanical aids for manual handling tasks

Before any decision is taken as to which type of risk control measures ought to be used, consideration should be given to the severity of injury, illness or disease that could occur. If the severity is high (i.e. fatality, serious injury etc), a control that is higher in the hierarchy i.e. elimination, substitution, isolation, engineering controls, should be used. Sometimes they may have to be used in combination with administrative controls and in some cases PPE.

It is not always practicable to immediately implement the higher hierarchy of control and there may still be a need to keep the process/activity going. In such situations interim control measures, in the form of administrative controls in combination with PPE, may be used until the higher hierarchy of control can be implemented provided the lesser control adequately controls the risk. Controls that are lower in the hierarchy require a greater amount of supervision.

If an employer conducts risk assessments and then controls the risks identified by using controls at the higher end of the hierarchy there is a greater likelihood that they will be deemed to have met their OHS responsibilities as far as is reasonably practicable.

Note: If there is an immediate risk to health or safety, you must make sure the process/activity in question is ceased until measures are taken to remove the immediate risk.



Plant and Equipment

Has a risk assessment been undertaken on all plant and equipment used at the workplace?

Under the OHS Plant Regulations 2017, employers are required to identify and control the risks associated with plant and equipment used in the workplace.

The following are examples of hazards identified and recorded in checklists for plant:

- someone's feet or toes may be caught under tines on a forklift
- parts could be ejected from the bench grinder
- someone could be crushed by a load falling from a telehandler.

When completing a plant hazard checklist, consider the hazards that may affect:

- plant operators
- anyone working, or in the vicinity of, the plant
- others who could be affected, such as visitors, subcontractors, etc.

Are records maintained which include details of inspections, maintenance, repair and alteration of plant?

In addition to identifying and controlling plant risks, under the OHS Plant Regulations 2017 employers are also required to keep detailed records of inspections, maintenance, repairs and alteration of plant and training given to employees.

There are some forms of plant that have to be serviced according to either the manufacturer's specifications or the relevant Australian Standards.

The service needs to be conducted by a competent person that is aware of the current information relating to the Australian Standard or manufacturer's specifications. Unless an employer has engaged in the practice of servicing their own equipment and can back this up with proper service records they should refrain from servicing their own equipment.

Employers should request documentation from the subcontractor, which should clearly identify the work that has been performed, any problems or hazards identified and the means by which the problem or hazard was rectified.

Where employers service their own equipment it is important that records are kept, such as a plant maintenance log book.

When equipment is provided by hire yards the hire yard companies will often routinely make available all relevant service and maintenance information on request.

Are pre-operational checks conducted on plant and equipment before it is used e.g. EWPs and boom lifts, and are these checks documented?

Either under manufacturer's specifications or the Australian Standards, some types of plant require users to conduct pre-operational safety checks prior to use.

The pre-operational check is a means of ensuring that the equipment continues to be safe to use in between annual servicing. The pre-operational check is important due to the particularly hazardous nature of these forms of plant and in the event of an incident in the workplace they would be requested as evidence. For example following the mechanical failure of a forklift resulting in an injury an employer would be asked "did you ensure that the forklift was safe to use from day to day?"

Daily Forklift Inspection

- ☑ Wheels and Tires
- ☑ For Loose Parts or Leaks
- ☑ Brake and Transmission Fluids
- ☑ Radiator Level, Engine Oil and Hydraulic Oil
- ☑ Battery Electrolyte
- ☑ Fuel in Tank
- ☑ Mast Chains and Hydraulic Drive
- ☑ Lamps, Lights and Mirrors
- ☑ Instruments and Pedals

Are there procedures for unsafe plant and equipment to be identified and withdrawn from service using appropriate methods of isolation – lockout and tag-out procedures? Are employees aware of these procedures?

A lockout tag-out procedure is an important means of preventing the inadvertent use of unsafe plant and equipment. Whilst employers will generally remove faulty equipment from the workplace, this is not always feasible and sometimes it can inadvertently remain on site.

The placement of a lockout tag caters for the 'what if' scenario e.g. an employee that is absent from the workplace when the equipment is taken out of service, by clearly identifying that the piece of equipment is not to be used.

The tags should be placed on the main operating switch of the equipment, or positioned in a prominent position, and be used in conjunction with other controls such as the disconnection of power supplies to the equipment.

Employers introducing lockout tags into their workplaces need to ensure that their employees are trained in the use of the lockout tags and informed of the location where they are stored.

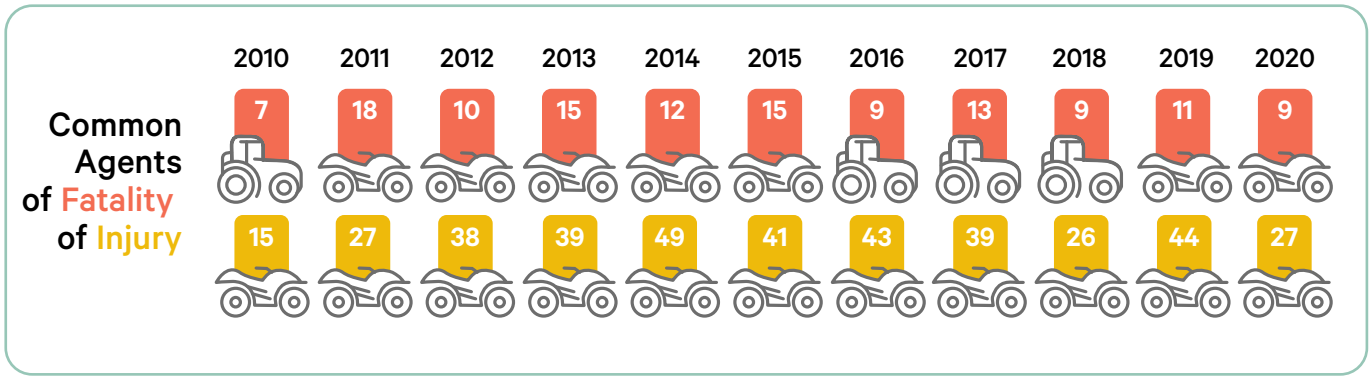
Lockout tags are available through safety suppliers.

When new plant or equipment is introduced, are all employees trained?

Under the OHS Plant Regulations 2017, employers are required to keep detailed records of training and instruction given to employees on the safe use of plant and equipment used in the workplace.

The supplier or installer of the plant or equipment is often the training provider e.g. the supplier of a telehandler will often provide a demonstration of its use. They may not however provide a certificate of attainment or competency. Employers should keep their own records of training, detailing the identity of the person that provided the training and the names of those in attendance.

Farm Equipment and the State of Knowledge



Quad bikes

- Choose the right vehicle for the job – it might not be a quad bike.
- Fit operator protective devices (OPD's) if there is a risk of the quad bike overturning.
- Do not allow untrained or inexperienced operators to use quad bikes, particularly in unfamiliar or high risk terrain or for unfamiliar tasks.
- Quad bike operators should always wear an approved helmet.
- Do not let anyone under 16 years old ride an adult-sized quad bike.
- Do not allow passengers on single-user vehicles.
- Make sure the quad bike is maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Do not exceed the cargo rack carrying limits or vehicle load carrying limits specified in the operator manual

https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/quad-bikes-farms-handbook-workplaces

Side-by-Side Vehicles

Safety tips for discussion with workers:

- Ensure the vehicle is fitted with a ROPS.
- Ensure all seatbelts are in good working condition and make sure all occupants wear a seatbelt while the side-by-side is operating
- Ensure doors and door nets (where supplied) stay fitted while operating the side-by-side vehicle
- Follow manufacturer's vehicle maintenance requirements
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations about operator age limits
- Don't allow untrained or inexperienced people to operate the vehicle, particularly in unfamiliar or high-risk terrain or for unfamiliar tasks.
- Make sure the operator has a suitable induction for the vehicle – don't assume that because they have experience with other vehicles, they know this one.
- Many manufacturers recommend wearing helmets in side-by-sides – ensure that you follow the manufacturer's recommendations for your vehicle.
- Set speed limits for different terrain and conditions (fog, vehicles, rain, poor light, etc).
- Consider and advise workers if there are no go zones for the side by side

Tractors

The biggest causes of tractor related fatalities

- Tractor roll over – ROP's and seatbelts
- Tractor run over – getting off a moving tractor or not properly braking
- Dropping of live loads
- Interaction with tractor attachments which have not been de-energised

Safety tips for discussion with workers:

- Always start a tractor from the driver's seat, not from the ground.
- Never dismount from a moving tractor or adjust or work on implements while they are in motion.
- If provided, safety mechanisms must not be tampered with.
- Always use three points of contact when getting on and off a tractor.
- Do not use or attach power take off (PTO) driven implements unless the power take-off shaft is guarded.
- Look up for clearances of power lines overhead and look down for signs for underground power lines.
- Do not park a tractor on a steep slope.
- Remove the key when getting off the tractor.
- Make sure all operators are trained and competent to safely use tractors.
- Always wear a seat belt where fitted.

Safe use of tractors with attachments: A handbook for workplaces - WorkSafe

Grain Augers and other plant that require guarding

Grain augers have featured prominently in a number of serious farming accidents and fatalities over the past decade.

Guards that were intended to prevent persons from accessing the moving parts of the machine can become damaged through usage and sometimes not replaced or sometimes taken off because of blockages. These guards cannot be treated as an inconvenience – they are a necessity.

A guard (e.g. shield, cover, casing, physical or electronic barrier) is intended to prevent contact between a hazardous machine part and any part of a person or their clothing.

There may be times when an operator needs to reach over, under, around or into a machine while it is running. If so, any moving parts or other hazards must be appropriately guarded from human contact.

Guards are needed for:

- any moving part or rotating shaft, gear, cable, sprocket, chain, clutch, coupling, cam or fan blade
- any crushing or shearing points (e.g. augers and slide blocks, roller feeds, conveyor feeds)
- ground wheels and track gear
- any machine component which cuts, grinds, pulps, crushes, breaks or pulverises farm produce
- hot parts where the surface temperature exceeds 120°C in normal operation.

To prevent injury:

- always use the manufacturer's guards and shields
- replace unguarded machinery with safer machinery
- check that older machinery is adequately guarded and retrofit where necessary
- have guards designed and fitted for improvised machinery – guards must comply with the relevant Australian Standards and manufacturer's specifications
- check that everyone can use machinery safely and are fully instructed about safe procedures for guarding, isolation devices, emergency stops, locks and danger tags
- only use augers when all guards are in place (with flighting, belt and shaft drives covered)
- never carry out repairs or maintenance when a machine is running
- use lock-out procedure and tag devices to prevent machinery being accidentally started during maintenance
- have a checklist procedure for maintenance jobs, which includes safely replacing guarding
- regularly check that all machinery complies with safety standards
- routinely inspect and maintain all plant and equipment, and have a comprehensive inspection conducted at least once a year
- keep all service, maintenance and inspection records
- keep children away from machinery and teach them that machinery is not play equipment
- consider using grain conveyors rather than an augers when possible.

Toolbox Meeting Script No. 3

How to talk to workers about plant safety and issue a drug and alcohol policy

Sample script

It's tool box meeting time" Phil shouts.

"Duck into the shed and grab a half a dozen leads, drills, grinders or power saws at random quick smart and bring 'em back in here!" Phil orders. "This month we are looking at plant safety."

Once the workers have returned with a sample of their tools and leads, and before they can gather their thoughts Phil rattles of a series of short sharp questions.

"Are the guards in place? Are the switches in good working order? Are the leads tested, tagged and in date? Are they frayed or damaged?... And when we are out in the field we have to make sure that guards are in place on the all farm machinery eg augers, that brakes are functional on the quad and tractors and that there are no mechanical issues or hydraulic leaks".

Phil then made clear to those present why he had sent them chasing tools and the reasons for his questions. "I do not want any unsafe tools or equipment on my property. We have to make sure that everything we use is safe and fit for purpose".

"And when you use your tools make sure that you always use the right tool for the job" Phil continued. "I do not want to see you jumping onto the quad bike when it would be more appropriate to use the side-by-side."

Phil also recognised that tools may not only be brought on to his farm in an unsafe condition but that they could also potentially become damaged or unsafe at any time.

"What I have here is some lockout tags. I bought these down at the local safety supplier. If something goes wrong with a piece of equipment whack one of these on it. Don't just whack one of these on it and think your job is done, make sure you come and tell me or tell me as well so that I know that we need to get that thing fixed".

It's for your safety as much as it is for mine!" Phil states affirmatively.

"And before you go I was talking to one of the employees on Friday afternoon and they was telling me that they were going away fishing with their mates on the weekend. They told me that they were looking forward to a great weekend of fishing and drinking!"

Phil then got to the point on this part of the conversation as he handed around a copy of his drug and alcohol policy for everyone to look at.

"I know you have all covered this in your induction but I was a bit worried after that conversation that the employee might rock up on Monday morning a bit unsteady on their feet…. And if that had of occurred this is how I would deal with it. This policy outlines how I would react if anyone should ever come to work in an unfit state."

I would say though that if anyone wants to discuss my policy or provide feedback on it please come and have a chat with me.

How does Phil record the toolbox meeting?

Phil records his toolbox meeting in his Toolbox Meeting template. Phil' records reflect the issues that he discussed and the names of those that were present on site during those discussions.

Note: An employer can get workers to sign off to indicate that they were present or they can simply record the names themselves. It does not matter how the names are recorded.

A sample of the minutes from this meeting are attached.

What does Phil do next?

Phil takes the Drug and Alcohol Policy and the minutes from the meetings and inserts them into his OHS folder in his office. For Phil this material constitutes a significant portion of his growing OHS system. The material that he has collated demonstrates that he has been proactive in engaging with his employees and subcontractors and consulting with them about matters that affect their safety.

Record of OHS Toolbox Meeting

Farm name:
123 Hort Lane, Livestockton

Meeting date:
Wednesday, 28 November 2021

Work group:

Distribution:
☐ Workers Notice Board

Meeting conducted by:
Phil, Director of Philosophical Farms

Attendance - all participants to be listed:
Tom Jones
Dick Tracey
Harriet Belafonte
Cecilia Rubblestone

Main subject of meeting:
Plant safety and Drug and Alcohol Policy

Main issues covered:
☑ Guarding and switches on plant
☑ Testing and tagging of tools and leads
☑ Ensure use of the right tool for the job
☑ Use of log books
☑ Use of lock out tags
☑ Issued Drug and Alcohol Policy

Other issues raised:

Agreed actions:
Arrange for local electrician to undertake testing and tagging of leads and tools.

Notes:

Manual Handling

Has effort been made to ensure that tasks that involve hazardous manual handling i.e. tasks that could result in a sprain or strain injury being sustained, have been properly identified and managed?

Manual handling injury is the largest component of all workplace injury, illness and disease in Victoria. It accounts for a significant proportion of the injuries reported in the farming industry.

A common misconception is that manual handling is lifting, which it is in part. Manual handling also includes carrying, pushing, pulling, bending, stretching, twisting, or reaching up overhead. Manual handling is any task or activity that could result in a musculoskeletal disorder, a sprain or strain type injury, arising from:

- repetitive or sustained awkward postures or movements, and/or
- the application of high force, including lifting.

There is no maximum weight limit in the regulations. Something which can be relatively light can be difficult to handle because of the awkward postures which have to be engaged.

Employers have a legal obligation under the OHS Manual Handling Regulations 2017 to minimize their employees' exposure to the risk of manual handling injury.

A tool to use to assess manual handling risks is the long version risk assessment tool which is contained within the Manual Handling - Code of Practice.

The Compliance Code for Hazardous Manual Handling is available for free from WorkSafe at https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-hazardous-manual-handling

When undertaking manual handling risk assessments, priority should be given to any injury reports that resulted in a WorkCover claim. Entries into the register of injuries book should also be examined and employees asked for their feedback on manual handling risks.

Are risk controls reviewed following reports of sprains or strains to prevent similar injuries occurring again?

Under the OHS Manual Handling Regulations 2017, employers are required to conduct or revisit, a risk assessment following any report of an injury that is the result of manual handling. It is very important to ensure that this requirement is met as the focus is on preventing the manual-handling incident from occurring again.

Do you provide training on safe animal handling practices?

Many farms have livestock and the risk of hazardous manual handling injury is increased due to the need to look after your livestock at various stages of their lives. Knowing the essentials of animal handling will help keep you and your workers safe. Providing information and instruction on:

- the behaviour patterns of the livestock you are growing including high risk times, eg knowing not to get between a cow and her calf, when there is fire about, when bulls are fighting
- the animals field of vision and the flight and fright zones for the livestock you are handling and using these to move either a single animal or a group of animals
- gentle handling and avoiding loud noises, understanding animals can baulk from shade or bright sun, etc
- flow of livestock through yards and ramps
- where escape paths are within the yards and how to safely move animals through gates and shut them
- how to assist with birthing when necessary
- how to lift young animals where necessary
- using crushes and/or dosing veterinary products with the specific type of animal or ear-tagging
- assisting with AI where necessary
- loading livestock on vehicles

Note that while manual handling risk occurs when interacting with livestock there are other potential hazards as well. These include animal diseases like Q fever or leptospirosis, using horses, motorbikes, quad bikes when mustering, crossing roadways or moving livestock along roadways.

Toolbox Meeting Script No. 4

How to talk to workers about manual handling and UV policy

Sample script

"Gather around, it's that time it's tool box meeting time" Phil shouts.

Once the workers have made themselves comfortable Phil opens up the discussions.

"Farming can be very physically demanding work. The most common cause of back injury is improper lifting, followed by poor posture, overexertion, and slips and falls. Using proper lifting techniques can significantly reduce the risk of back injuries."

"Manual handling means any activity requiring the use of human force to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any static or moving load. Heavy lifting, work requiring poor postures and repetitive work can lead to these joint and muscle problems."

"Before lifting, test the weight of the load. If it feels too heavy for you to move by yourself then ask for help or reschedule the task for a time when help is available. You can also make into smaller loads; or use a mechanical aid such as a dolly, hoist or forklift. I don't care if the job takes longer if it means that you go home safely."

Phil asks his employees for their feedback on how they believe that some of the tasks that they perform on the farm can be made easier so as to ensure that they do not sustain sprain or strain type injuries. Suggestions included changing the workplace layout and providing rest breaks from some of the more strenuous tasks.

***Note:** There is a range of high risk manual handling tasks that farmers can talk to employees about in terms of preventing musculoskeletal (sprain and strain) type injuries.*

Examples include:

- *handling of animals (sheep and small cattle)*
- *handling of wool*
- *moving of hay bales*
- *milking of cows*
- *movement of large drums or containers of farm chemicals*

"Thanks everyone, that's how it's done…. and before you go I have noticed that at this time of year as the weather improves we are all at risk of sunburn or a bit of skin cancer."

"Here is my UV policy. These are the rules that apply on my farm/s. Whenever you are performing outdoor work on a Philosophical Farm its hats, sunscreen and sleaves at least down to the elbow as per my policy!"

To make his position abundantly clear Phil emphasised "There'll be no bare backs and no singlets on my farm. Anyone that fails to adhere to this policy will be disciplined in accordance with this policy!"

Recommendation: Engage with workers about sunburn and UV exposure. It is amazing how often workers have personal experience of having skin damage and surgical procedures to remove sun spots and skin cancers.

The Anti-Cancer Council have some excellent resources that they make available to assist employers and workers to facilitate discussions.

How does Phil record the toolbox meeting?

Phil records his toolbox meeting in his Toolbox Meeting template. Phil' records reflect the issues that he discussed and the names of those that were present on site during those discussions.

Note: An employer can get workers to sign off to indicate that they were present or they can simply record the names themselves. It does not matter how the names are recorded.

A sample of the minutes from this meeting are attached.

What does Phil do next?

Phil takes the UV Policy and the minutes from the meetings and inserts them into his OHS folder in his office. For Phil this material constitutes a significant portion of his growing OHS system. The material that he has collated demonstrates that he has been proactive in engaging with his employees and subcontractors and consulting with them about matters that affect their safety.

Record of OHS Toolbox Meeting

Farm name:
123 Hort Lane, Livestockton

Meeting date:
Wednesday, 20 September 2021

Work group:

Distribution:

- ☐ Project Manager
- ☐ Site Supervisor / Safety Officer
- ☐ Site Safety Plan File
- ☐ Workers Notice Board

Meeting conducted by:
Phil, Director of Philosophical Farms

Attendance - all participants to be listed:
Tom Jones
Dick Tracey
Harriet Belafonte
Cecilia Rubblestone

Main subject of meeting:
Manual handling and UV protection

Main issues covered:

- ☑ Moving of bales of wool in the wool shed
- ☑ Correct techniques for handling of sheep whilst shearing
- ☑ Use of drum dolley to move 44 gallon drums
- ☑ Use of machinery (e.g. forklift) to move items rather than engaging in repetitive lifting back and forth.
- ☑ Issued UV Policy

Agreed actions:
Agreed to order some extra dolleys for the workshop.

Notes:

Chemical Safety – Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods

There are two sets of laws in Victoria that deal with chemical safety in the workplace, the OHS Hazardous Substances Regulations 2017 and the Dangerous Goods Storage and Handling Regulations 2000.

Hazardous Substances have the potential to harm human health, through immediate or long-term exposure, through inhalation, ingestion or skin absorption. The health effects could be immediate or long term and can include poisoning, skin irritation, chemical burns, breathing difficulties or organ diseases.

Dangerous goods cause immediate physical and chemical effects through fire, explosions, corrosion or poisoning. They affect property, the environment and people. Dangerous Goods are often identifiable by HAZCHEM diamonds which appear on the packaging.

Hazardous substances

Are there Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all substances used in the workplace?

Under the OHS Hazardous Substances Regulations 2017, a SDS is required for every hazardous substance that is used in the workplace. This includes all pressure pack sprays, fertilisers, ag-chemicals, glues, solvents, bonding agents, liquids, gases, oils, paints and detergents regardless of the volume or quantity kept in the workplace.

SDS are obtainable from the manufacturers of the products, not the suppliers, and under these Regulations the manufacturers must supply them to you on request. Manufacturers will often make them available for download on their websites.

SDS are a valuable source of information regarding the chemical products used in the workplace. The range of information includes:

- Information regarding the short term and long term health effects
- Information regarding the routes of exposure
- Instructions for the safe handling and use
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements
- Storage requirements
- Dangerous Goods information
- First Aid precautions
- Spill procedures
- Fire risks

Is there a Hazardous Substances & Dangerous Goods register in operation i.e. a folder containing the list of product names and Safety Data Sheets (SDS)?

All SDS should be kept in a folder, or register, and sorted alphabetically. Use of electronic platforms are also suitable but the information needs to be readily accessible to those that use the substances, particularly in emergency situations (e.g. severe eye irritation from exposure to a chemical).

An index at the front of the folder should list all of the materials and provide some basic information such as whether the substance is a hazardous substance or a dangerous good, the quantity stocked on site and the quantity stocked.

The Hazardous Substances Register should be kept in a prominent position in the workplace, preferably within easy access to the first aid station. A copy of the SDS register should be kept in the areas that the substances are used.

Have risk assessments been undertaken of all hazardous substances?

On the SDS there should be a one line statement, which either reads “This material is hazardous according to criteria of Safe Work Australia; HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE” or “Not Hazardous according to Safe Work Australia criteria”. Under the OHS Hazardous Substances Regulations 2017, employers are required to control the risks associated with the handling of all substances identified as hazardous in the workplace.

Have you provided any training for your employees on chemical safety?

It is an employer’s responsibility to train and instruct their employees to work safely. Meeting this requirement also involves ensuring that your employees are aware of the hazards that are associated with the substances that they use in the workplace and the correct and safe procedures for the use of those substances.

A practical way to train your employees on chemical safety is to show them how to read a SDS. This could even be done at morning tea or at a toolbox meeting.

SDS can range anywhere from one to twenty or more pages and often can contain a lot of technical information. Your employees do not need to know about the technical details but they certainly need to know about some of the important elements such as the safe handling and PPE requirements.

Apart from advising your employees on the name of the product for which you are reading the SDS, the first thing that you will highlight to your employees is the health effects associated with the particular product. The SDS will often detail short term and long term health effects. For example if not used properly short term exposure to some products may cause a bit of dry itchy skin or a sore throat. In the long term with continued inappropriate use the health effects could for example include major skin irritations or chronic respiratory problems.

What you will then highlight to your employees is the means by which they can avoid both the short term and long term health effects, which is all detailed in the safe handling and personal protective equipment requirements that are detailed on the SDS. You can then highlight the storage and handling requirements, the fire risks, spill containment procedures and first aid procedures.

Have a set of SDS in your workplace, tell your employees and subcontractors where they are kept and tell them that if they ever want to know about any substance that they are exposed to the information is available for them. Make sure that you obtained SDS from subcontractors for any substances that they are using e.g. from contract sprayers, before the subcontractor commences work.

The records that an employer provides to show that they have trained their employees could form an important part of the defence that the employer's solicitors would use in the event of an employee suffering adverse health effects from chemical exposure. Even diary notes which record the training that is provided; the details of the issues discussed and the names of those in attendance constitutes a record that an employer can keep. Put it in the diary and do this every six to twelve months.

Are chemicals properly stored on your property?

Storing agricultural chemicals correctly helps to prolong their shelf life and protect people, animals and the environment. Follow the storage directions on the chemical product labels and SDS.

Chemicals must be:

- safely locked away from children, unauthorised people and animals
- stored according to The Storage and Handling of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Australian Standard 2507-1998).

If storing small quantities of chemicals, you should:

- maintain a list of all chemicals kept in storage
- store chemicals in a cool, well- ventilated area that is away from direct sunlight (such as a shed), lockable, has an impervious (chemical-proof) floor and shelving and is bunded to contain spills
- avoid stockpiling chemicals by purchasing them only as needed
- store chemicals in their original labelled containers (if labels come off, re-label the container)
- keep all SDS in a register nearby for easy access
- never store chemicals in food or drink containers
- separate incompatible or different chemical types to avoid cross- contamination
- never store chemicals with seeds, fertilisers, protective clothing or stockfeed
- ensure running water, first aid and other facilities as required by the SDS are available.

Further Information and Advice

- Compliance Code for Hazardous Substances https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-hazardous-substances
- A Step by Step Guide for Manufacturers, Importers & Suppliers of Hazardous Substances & Dangerous Goods https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/manufacturers-and-importing-suppliers-and-suppliers-hazardous-substances-and-dangerous
- Dangerous Goods Safety Basics https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/dangerous-goods-safety-basics
- Code of Practice for storage and handling of dangerous goods https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/code-practice-storage-and-handling-dangerous-goods
- Farm chemical transport, storage, mixing and disposal – Department of Agriculture https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/chemicals/responsible-chemical-use/farm-chemical-transport-storage-mixing-and-disposal
- Farm management chemicals – Department of Agriculture https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/chemicals
- Agriculture Chemical User Permit (ACUP)
- Agricultural chemical user permit | Licences and permits | Chemicals | Farm management | Agriculture Victoria

Dangerous Goods

Are Dangerous Goods used on site?

Dangerous goods used at the site may include explosives, flammable liquids such as petrol, kerosene, turps and flammable paints; corrosives such as hydrochloric acid; oxy/acetylene welding sets and LPG. Make sure there is a SDS for each dangerous good. Get these from the supplier or manufacturer of the substance. Provide correct personal protective equipment for chemical use. Ensure first aid provisions are suitable for dangerous goods on the site, including adequate eye wash. Make sure workers have been trained in the use, storage and handling of dangerous goods.

Have risk assessments for the storage and handling of dangerous goods been undertaken and have appropriate controls been put in place e.g. appropriate storage of flammables?

Employers are required to assess the quantities of substances and materials e.g. gasses, that are classified as dangerous goods e.g. flammables. Once the quantity kept on the premises exceeds certain quantities the employer needs to ensure that requirements are met for the storage and handling of these materials e.g. flammable goods storage cabinets and HAZCHEM signage. These requirements normally apply if the amount stored exceeds 500 kilograms or litres (quantities vary based on class/ type of Dangerous Goods).

Employers also need to consider the storage and handling of dangerous goods in their workplace. For example:

- Flammable liquids should not be placed in work areas in which the activities might become a potential ignition source.
- Oxy acetylene cylinders should never be left free standing, even when empty as they may explode on impact from a fall. Cylinders should always be chained to a wall or cylinder trolley or kept securely in a cage or vented room.

Are there any flammable and combustible liquids used at the site?

Store flammable liquids away from any ignition sources or sources of heat. Keep containers closed when not in use and secured when the site is unattended. Remove all combustible materials from areas where flammable liquids are stored, used or decanted. Transfer flammable liquids in a safe manner where a dry chemical fire extinguisher is available. Make sure containers are clearly labelled. Ensure nobody smokes near flammable or combustible substances and display NO SMOKING and/or NO SOURCES OF IGNITION signs where these are stored.

Is LPG used at the site?

Keep LPG cylinders in an upright position at all times. Restrain them from falling and protect them from vehicle damage. Keep cylinder valves closed when not in use. Ensure LPG is not used near ignition sources or while smoking. Provide a dry chemical fire extinguisher.

Ensure appliances are compatible and a regulator is to be used where necessary. Store cylinders in a well ventilated area away from combustible materials.

Are welding sets used at the site?

Ensure attached equipment is compatible and a regulator set is provided where necessary. Provide a flashback arrester – note that these devices must be replaced every 5 years. If the hose length is more than 3m flashback arrestors need to be installed at both ends of the line.

Keep cylinders upright and protected from impact. Provide personal protective equipment for welding.

Regularly inspect oxy equipment to ensure that hoses are not pulled too tightly, causing hose cracking and gas leakage. Gas hoses crack at the ends as a result of being pulled too tightly when stored away.

Are explosives used at the site?

Keep explosives in a locked receptacle. Do not leave discarded detonator boxes on the site. Do not leave excess explosives on an unattended site. You need to obtain an explosives licence from WorkSafe to buy and discharge explosives.

Is health surveillance needed to monitor the health of employees exposed to hazardous substances (e.g. asbestos, isocyanates, lead)?

Health surveillance is required for employees who are exposed to a 'Scheduled Hazardous Substance'. A scheduled hazardous substance is a substance listed in Schedule 3 of the National Model Regulations for the Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances. A registered medical practitioner must carry out the health surveillance. A copy of the health surveillance report must be provided to the relevant employee.

AQF-3 Chemical Accreditation

AQF3 Chemical Accreditation course (also known as "Chemical Handling Certificate" or "Chemical ticket") focuses on upskilling chemical users on the industry's best practice methods and national standards.

Participants are provided with practical advice covering industry's updates, local resistance and spraying issues to minimise chemical costs, limit spray drift and improve spraying outcomes.

The ChemCert AQF3 Accreditation includes the two units AHCCHM304 Transport and Store Chemicals and AHCCHM307 Prepare and Apply Chemicals to Control Pest, Weeds and Diseases. It is nationally recognised for five years and enables the holder to legally use restricted chemicals unsupervised.

Successful completion of the course allows participants to apply for the ACUP and/or COL in Victoria and/or ACDC in Queensland (for the latter the unit Control Weeds is also needed).

Agriculture Chemical User Permits

An agricultural chemical user permit (ACUP) is a permit issued to a person that gives authority to:

- purchase specified 'restricted supply' chemicals in Victoria
- use specified 'restricted use' chemicals in Victoria

You must undertake relevant training before you can apply for and hold an ACUP.

ACUPs don't authorise a person to use agricultural chemicals on another person's property, crop or commodity for a fee or reward (contractors).

For this purpose, see Commercial Operator Licence.

Who needs an ACUP?

A person is required to hold an ACUP to use any of the agricultural chemical products that are Schedule 7 poisons (DANGEROUS POISONS) or that contain any of the following chemicals:

- atrazine, metham sodium, or ester formulations of MCPA, 2,4-D, 2,4-DB or triclopyr
- 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) or PAPP (4-aminopropiophenone)
- pindone concentrate (2.5% or greater) for the preparation of baits
- gaseous methyl bromide
- phosphine formulated as liquefied gas
- timber treatment copper chromium arsenic (CCA).

Exceptions

Where a 'restricted use' chemical is used, a Standard endorsed ACUP is not required by people who are operating under the direct and immediate supervision (within sight and sound) of a Standard endorsed ACUP holder.

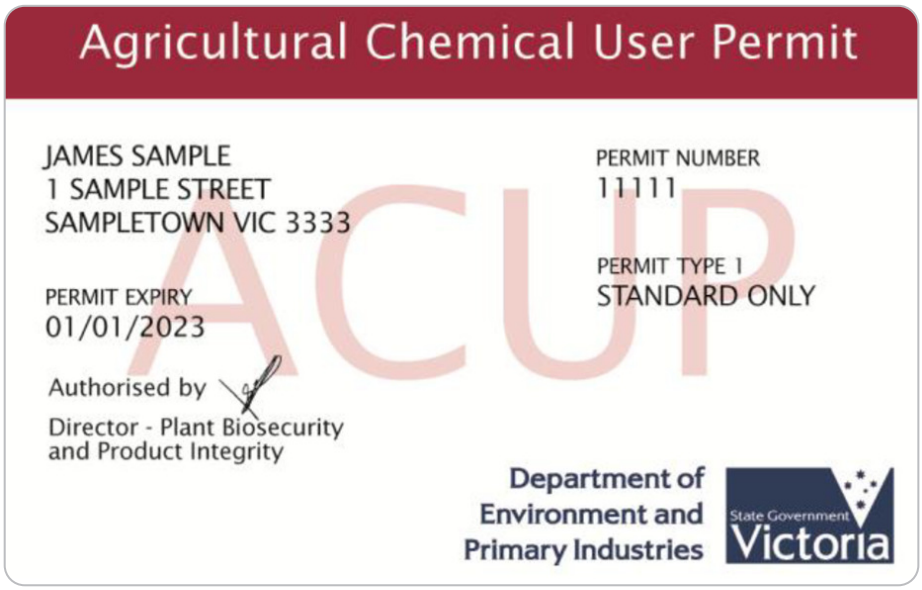
ACUP types and training requirements

There are five different ACUP endorsement types, depending on the agricultural chemicals you intend to use. The endorsement types are:

- Standard
- 1080 and PAPP (para-aminopropiophenone)
- Pindone concentrate
- Fumigants
- Copper chromium arsenic

All ACUPs are issued for 10 years and no further training is required during this period to maintain the ACUP. Previous training equivalents are also accepted.

A chemical user training course certificate or card is not an ACUP — it only qualifies the holder to apply for a Standard endorsed ACUP.



Sample agricultural chemical user permit issued by Agriculture Victoria, which includes the permit holder's name and address, and the permit type, number and expiry.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Under the OHS Act 2004 employees have a duty of care to themselves and their co-workers. They also have a duty to follow any instruction and use any equipment provided by the employer for the purposes of safety, and for the purpose of the employer meeting their responsibility under the Act.

Is there a policy and procedure for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

PPE is the last alternative for employers to use when controlling risks i.e. it sits at the bottom of the hierarchy of control.

A policy for PPE e.g. hearing protection and goggles, confirms an employer's commitment to the health safety and welfare of its employees and confirms that PPE will only be used when controls that are higher in the hierarchy cannot be implemented. This policy also confirms the employer's expectations that employees and subcontractors will use the PPE that is provided for their safety and confirms that non-compliance with the policy can result in disciplinary action being taken.

Whilst employees have a duty under the OHS Act to look after their own safety and follow any instructions or use any equipment provided by the employer for the purposes of safety, the responsibility for ensuring that PPE is provided and used is an employer's responsibility.

Is PPE provided and fitted for all employees where necessary e.g. for work in confined spaces?

There are certain jobs where it is important that the PPE be fitted to the individual performing the task. For example jobs that involve wearing a respirator will require the operator to be clean-shaven so as to ensure a proper fit.

Employers have to ensure that employees are provided with the right PPE and that it is used appropriately.

Have staff been instructed in the proper use and care for all PPE?

Part of an employer's responsibility to provide a safe place and safe systems of work includes ensuring that employees are trained in the safe use, storage and maintenance of PPE. There are some forms of PPE that require maintenance and cleaning. Earmuffs for example should be cleaned periodically with alcohol swipes, respirators need to have filters regularly replaced, face shields and goggles need to be cleaned regularly or they become ineffective and end up not being used. If PPE is not maintained it becomes ineffective or it can lead to health effects that can be sometimes more harmful than the substances that the PPE is intended to protect against.

Employers should keep a record of training that is provided to employees on the use of PPE.

Have you identified your workers' personal protection needs?

Have a good look at the various types of work, the plant, equipment and chemicals used and the locations where work takes place. Any source of danger to workers' health or safety needs to be eliminated altogether or, where this is not practicable, the risks must be properly controlled. The best and most foolproof ways to control risk is to isolate the source of danger from people or to use physical or presence sensing guarding to prevent people coming into contact with the danger. But where this cannot be done, or when it does not fully control the risk, use properly understood safe work procedures and the right combination of PPE to fully safeguard workers.

Have you made sure the right PPE has been provided?

If you are using PPE as a way of controlling risks, it is your responsibility to supply your workers with the right equipment. Insist that your supplier provides equipment complying with the appropriate Australian Standards and all necessary information on the correct fitting, cleaning and maintenance of the equipment. So far as possible, allow your workers to select the particular model so that it gives them maximum personal comfort. Comfortable PPE gets worn, while "one size fits all" PPE that is uncomfortable is only worn under sufferance.

Do your workers understand why they need PPE?

Take the time and effort to make sure your workers know what the possible consequences to their health and safety may be if they do not use the right PPE. If they properly understand what can go wrong, they are more likely to use PPE without being constantly told. If workers are reluctant to use PPE, encourage them to help you develop a better way to do the work so that they won't need PPE.

Is PPE use being adequately monitored?

PPE is only as good as the degree to which it is properly used. Providing a worker with PPE and then failing to make sure it is being used is simply not good enough. Conduct regular checks. Insist that the rules for PPE are always followed. Take appropriate action to make this stick.

Is PPE being inspected and replaced as necessary?

Faulty PPE is sometimes worse than no PPE because it can give the worker a false sense of security. For example, the use of incompatible components in safety harness systems can cause the "roll out" of snap hooks that may result in a worker falling to their death. Make sure PPE is checked regularly for serviceability and compatibility.

Do you review your PPE needs?

New products come on to the market that may provide you with a way of controlling risks without the need for PPE any longer. For example, recent innovations in temporary guard railing systems now mean there is a product to suit most types of roofing work, reducing the need to rely on safety harness systems. Also, new and improved PPE products are regularly being introduced. Keep up to date through trade magazines, your safety equipment supplier and your industry association.

Toolbox Meeting Script No. 5

How to talk to workers about chemical safety and issue a personal protective equipment policy

To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicably, that he meets his duty under the OHS Act 2004 to consult with workers about matters that affect their safety Phillip from Philosophical Farms has decided to conduct monthly OHS toolbox meetings on each of his sites.

Phil knows that safety is discussed on a routine basis on his sites but that those discussions generally relate to the work that is being performed at that time. Phil has pencilled in the third Wednesday of every month to conduct his toolbox meetings to compliment the day to day discussions and to properly utilise his OHS systems.

Sample script

Gather around everyone, we're going to have a chat about chemical safety" Phil announces.

"What I have here is a Safety Data Sheet for Paraquat"

***Note:** A farmer can use any SDS for the purpose of a toolbox meeting. It is recommended that the SDS used should relate to something that is clearly identified as being 'hazardous' and used commonly on site.*

"It says here on this SDS that if you get a bit of this stuff on your skin that you will end up with dry itchy skin or if you are breathing it in you will have a headache." Phil advises.

"Yeah whatever, we'll whack some Oil of Ulan or take a panadol, she'll be right mate" was the response from one of the workers.

"Mate, you're missing the point, but let's read on. It says here that if you continue to use this stuff inappropriately you'll end up with a severe skin disorder, severe breathing difficulties or potentially neurological damage! Failing to use this stuff properly can actually have fatal consequences" Phil declared.

Phil could already anticipate the natural response that would come with a state of awareness about the hazardous nature of the substance 'bugger that mate, we'll never use that stuff again'.

Before anyone could interject Phil continued "But if you use that stuff appropriately you do not suffer any of those adverse health effects…. So here are the manufacturer's instructions on how to use the stuff safely and here are the manufacturer's instructions on the PPE that you are supposed to wear when you use it."

Without breaking stride in the conversation Phil kept the education process happening.

"But what if something does go wrong? Well, detailed here on the SDS are the first aid procedures, the emergency procedures, the storage and handling requirements and the spill containment"

"What the SDS tells you is about the risks associated with the inhalation, ingestion or the skin absorption of the materials that you use to do your job."

"The other area of risk covered by the SDS relates to the materials that have those diamonds on them, you know the ones, flammable gases, flammable liquids, toxins etc."

"The SDS will tell you how to safely handle and store those materials. For example, you never leave an oxy acetylene cylinder free standing on its own, you always have them chained up to a trolley or a wall" Phil stated.

"When you use your oxy kits and then put them away you don't pull the hoses so tight, even despite trying to store them away neatly, that the hoses end up cracking at the ends and then you put them into the back of your van"

"It's not just a question of knowing what is on the safety data sheets. It's a question of knowing that whenever you see materials used on site that have those Hazchem diamonds on them that you treat those things with respect".

What Phil had just achieved was to educate the worker's on his site about chemical safety; teaching the workers to read one Safety Data Sheet.

"And before you go, it is always a concern that sometimes it seems that some people do not have enough regard for their own safety, for example when they use chemicals or power tools; particularly when it comes to the need to wear personal protective equipment – the gloves, the goggles, the hearing protection".

Phil handed around a copy of his Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy for everyone to have a look at. Whilst it was being read Phil continued "do not be under any illusions. If you do not wear your safety gear I (or my supervisors) will have a stern word with you and, if needed, will take disciplinary action".

"But fair dinkum, that is not what we are about. Philosophical Farms is a small business. Just like you we are just trying to do our work, make a living and go home every night to our families'."

"We don't want to see anyone get hurt" Phil states firmly.

"So alright, let's think it through" Phil said "Let's think about what might happen if you were to use that chemical or grinder and you did not wear your safety glasses and you lose an eye".

"One eyed farm worker does not go very far in this industry….if you have ever been off work on compo it sucks because you end up with reduced pay…you'd be at home driving everyone bonkers".

"Morale is going down the toilet…. The business was a four man crew and now it is just three, the other boys are not happy because they have to do more work"

"My WorkCover premiums are going up. Someone else has to do your job. We get fined or prosecuted supposedly because we did not provide you with adequate supervision."

Frustrated, Phil knew that even with his own employees that he had given them various forms of PPE on more than one occasion. Phil continued.

"I know that I have given everyone the necessary PPE. The policy requires that you will wear the PPE that you have been given and that you will maintain it"

"If I come into the shed and I see you standing at the saw with your safety glasses sitting on the top of your noggin (head) we are going to have words. Even worse, if I come out and I ask you where your glasses are and you say 'hang on boss, I'll go get them' we are definitely going to have words.

How does Phil record the toolbox meeting?

Phil records his toolbox meeting in his Toolbox Meeting Pad. Phil' records reflect the issues that he discussed and the names of those that were present on site during those discussions.

Note: An employer can get workers to sign off to indicate that they were present or they can simply record the names themselves. It does not matter how the names are recorded.

A sample of the minutes from this meeting are attached.

What does Phil do next?

Phil takes the Personal Protective Equipment Policy and the minutes from the meetings and inserts them into his OHS folder/computer in his office. For Phil this material constitutes a significant portion of his growing OHS system. The material that he has collated demonstrates that he has been proactive in engaging with his employees and subcontractors

Record of OHS Toolbox Meeting

Farm name:
123 Hort Lane, Livestockton

Meeting date:
Wednesday, 18 May 2021

Work group:

Distribution:
☐ Project Manager
☐ Site Supervisor/Safety Officer
☐ Site Safety Plan File
☐ Workers Notice Board

Meeting conducted by:
Phil, Director of Philosophical Farms

Attendance - all participants to be listed:
Tom Jones
Dick Tracey
Harriet Belafonte
Cecilia Rubblestone

Main subject of meeting:
Chemical safety and Personal Protective Equipment

Main issues covered:
Spoke to workers on site regarding:
☑ How to read a safety data sheet (SDS)
☑ Discussed safe storage and handling of dangerous goods
☑ Issued Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy

Other issues raised:

Agreed actions:

Notes:

Confined spaces

Have you identified 'confined spaces' on your farm?

Working in a confined space is a high-risk work environment and must only be done by trained persons.

Confined spaces are enclosed or partially enclosed structures that pose serious and immediate danger because they are primarily not designed to be areas where people work. They often have poor ventilation, which allows hazardous atmospheres to quickly develop, especially if the space is small. The hazards are not always obvious and may change from one day to the next.

A confined space is determined by the following associated hazards (and not just because the work is performed in a physically restrictive location):

- restricted entry or exit,
- a hazardous atmosphere (ie an atmosphere that has a harmful level of any contaminant or does not have a safe oxygen level),
- risk of engulfment by any stored substance (except liquids).

The harmful effects of a physical or chemical agent are greater in a confined space and may expose a person in the space to a possible life threatening situation.

Specific examples of possible confined spaces on a farm may include any hopper, grain silo, integrated feed system, vats (ie milk, cheese or wine), tanks (ie sewage, fuel and water) and manure pits. They must have the appropriate signage and have restricted access.

Working in confined spaces can result in:

- loss of consciousness, impairment, injury or death due to the immediate effects of airborne contaminants
- fire or explosion from the ignition of flammable contaminants that come into contact with an ignition source (e.g. flame, hot surface, spark)
- asphyxiation from oxygen deficiency or immersion in a free-flowing material (e.g. grain, sand, fertiliser, water or other liquids)
- infectious diseases, dermatitis or lung conditions such as hypersensitivity pneumonitis can result from contact with micro-organisms (e.g. viruses, bacteria or fungi) – sewers, grain silos and manure pits are examples of confined spaces where biological hazards may be present
- difficulty in rescuing and treating an injured or unconscious person.

Have you established appropriate procedures for entry into confined spaces and confined space rescue?

Before you begin any work that might involve entry by yourself or a worker into a confined space think about:

- carrying out the work from outside the space
- getting professionals to do the work instead
- reviewing any safety information (e.g. technical standards or other information) and, if relevant, finding out about previous uses for the space
- placing signs that show you must have a signed entry permit to enter.

A confined space risk assessment must be done. A confined space entry permit may be used as a record of the risk assessment.

You must also follow certain other procedures, which include:

- taking measurements of the "air" inside the confined space with appropriate measuring equipment
- ensuring the area is well ventilated before you go in
- providing personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as rescue, first aid and fire suppression equipment
- ensuring workers are trained in safe working in confined spaces, emergency rescue and the use of safety harnesses and safety or rescue lines where there is a risk of falling
- placing a competent standby person outside the confined space for support and in case of an emergency.

Use alternative power sources (e.g. electric appliances). Exhaust fumes from diesel or petrol-powered appliances (e.g. when using pumps to clean out water tanks) can result in a potentially lethal build-up of carbon monoxide. These fumes are heavier than air, can gradually seep into a confined space and fill up to a dangerous level, leading to loss of consciousness.

Working at Heights - Prevention of falls

Falls are one of the most common causes of death and injury on farms, especially among older farmers. It is common for people to fall from horses, motorbikes, farm machinery, steps, haystacks, trucks, ladders, silos, windmills, fences, the back of utes and in livestock yards.

A bad fall can lead to long term injuries making it difficult for a person to continue farming. A permanent disability from a fall is a common reason for people being admitted to hospital and then residential care.

Farms have many potential hazards, such as ladders, silos, windmills, gates and ramps. Even from waist height, falls can cause serious injuries. There are lots of things you can do around the farm to help prevent falls:

- Attach extra grab rails on trucks, tractors, headers, ramps and steps.
- Use non slip tape on ladders, and non-slip matting in the workshop; replace old steps with non-slip metal mesh and a rail.
- Avoid heights where possible, but if you have to work at height, wear a safety harness (note that workers need to be trained).
- Install good lighting, especially around sheds.
- Wear well fitted boots with non-slip soles.
- Tidy up workshops, don't leave clutter around.
- Keep paths and walkways clear.
- Keep as fit as possible as you may be less likely to fall if in good physical shape.
- Write a checklist of potential falling hazards at your farm.

Has effort been made to ensure that tasks that involve accessing heights greater than two metres by employees or subcontractors are properly controlled?

A good starting point for assessing the risks associated with work performed at heights is to ask "Is the work performed at a height that is greater than two metres and is there a risk of the person performing the work falling?" If the answer to these questions is 'yes' then steps need to be taken to make sure that they are adequately protected from this risk?

Employers need to be aware of the requirements under the OHS Prevention of Falls Regulations 2017 to control the risks associated with work performed at heights.

The hierarchy of control for prevention of falls

Can the work or some of the work be done from the ground or a solid construction?

It may be easier and safer to perform the work at ground level. If having to work on a structure (e.g. a farm shed) and workers remain exposed to a live edge then fall protection such as handrails need to be provided.

Can a passive fall prevention device be used?

A passive fall prevention device is material or equipment or a combination thereof that is designed for preventing falls and, after initial installation, does not require any ongoing adjustment, alteration or operation by any person to ensure the device's integrity.

Examples include elevated work platforms – fixed work platforms, cherry pickers, step platforms, building maintenance units; scaffolding; guard railing; safety mesh; special forklifts such as order picking forklifts, purlin trolleys, etc.

Can a work positioning system be used?

Examples include an industrial rope access system or travel restraint system. Workers need to be trained in the used of these devices.

Can a fall injury prevention system be used?

Examples include a safety net, catch platform or fall arrest harness system. Workers need to be trained in the used of these devices. Rescue procedures may also be needed. Structural considerations (e.g. anchor points) also need to be taken into account.

If none of the above measures are reasonably practicable or do not minimise the risk of a fall then a fixed or portable ladder or administrative control must be used.

Ladders should only be used to access and perform work at heights when it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no other practicable alternative.

Step ladders should always be tied in and extend one metre above the point of access.

Painters style platform ladders are far more preferable than A frame ladders.

Grain silo access

Grain silo access ladders are commonly installed directly vertical to the silo and at the top of the silo can present a significant fall risk

Some measures that can be implemented to address these risks include:

- Install sight glasses on silos to reduce the need to climb.
- Find alternative methods to climbing (e.g. fill feed silos pneumatically from the feed supply truck).
- Provide roof fall protection such as an edge or guard rail.
- Provide a secured hinged wire mesh guard on all external openings above the maximum level of grain. Note that the hinge must be secured so that it requires a tool to open it.
- Install an external ladder cage where required.
- Install an approved fall restraint system and harness when climbing external ladders on silos or accessing the top hatch for use by trained operators only. A second person may also be needed to rescue a person accessing a silo in this manner.

Mezzanine Storage Areas

Mezzanine storage areas are popular in sheds for creation of additional storage space. There have been a number of serious incidents over the years with workers falling off the edge, or falling through the ceilings of structures that were never intended to be used for mezzanine storage.

Mezzanine storage areas need to be properly engineered and designed and have in place:

- Safe means of access and egress – stairs rather than a ladder
- Adequate fall protection – handrails with top rail, mid rail and kickplates.

Working on vehicles

- Jumping down from vehicles is bad for your knees and you are likely to fall.
- Take your time climbing down from the cab and use the provided steps and handholds rather than the steering wheel.
- Plan loading and unloading to avoid the need to work at height on the vehicle.
- Wear well-fitting, slip-resistant safety footwear when working on vehicles.
- Ask for well-designed access when purchasing vehicles and think about how you will be able to get to the high parts of a machine to maintain it safely.

Working with bales: loading trailers and stacking

Many incidents (some fatal) involve loading bales on to the trailer, or during or after stacking. When loading, check that:

- trailer floors are in good condition and end racks or hay ladders are used;
- loads are built to bind themselves. Use sound bales for all edges;
- stackers keep away from the edges. Drivers should indicate clearly before the trailer is moved;
- full loads are secured before leaving the field and no one rides on them. Provide ladders for access to the load.
- Stacking is a skill, and requires trained, competent people.
- Inspect stacks regularly, and make sure destacking is done safely.
- A falling bale can kill, so keep people clear when unloading or destacking.

Work platforms on fork-lift trucks

- If you need to raise people above the ground, eg for building maintenance, use properly designed work platforms rather than ladders.
- Never use grain buckets, pallets, or other makeshift equipment. Serious injuries and death have resulted from buckets tipping accidentally.
- For planned or regular work at height, you should use a fully integrated and properly constructed working platform. You should not normally use a non-integrated work platform

Electrical Safety on Farms

Have you considered electrical safety on the farm?

- Your sheds, workshops, shearing sheds etc have residual current devices (trip switches) installed on their switchboards
- You maintain your electrical leads and have them tested and tagged
- You use power points for each device and don't overload power points with double-adaptors
- You only use a qualified person to work on electrical jobs

Do you have overhead powerlines on your farm?

- You have made all workers aware of overhead power lines and have advised them that you don't have to make contact with power lines as electricity can jump if you get too close to powerlines
- You have made workers and contractors aware that during hot and windy conditions powerlines can sag and sway by 3 metres or more.
- You have given instruction that any equipment cannot come closer than 6.4 metres of powerlines even when it is raised, tipping, loading or unloading.
- You have given instruction that should a worker come into contact with overhead powerlines, and it is safe to do so, **that they should stay in the vehicle.**
- If it is not safe to stay in the vehicle e.g. the vehicle has caught on fire, you have given instruction on how to leave the vehicle safely – **NEVER** touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time, jump off the vehicle keeping your legs and feet close together and landing on both feet at the same time. Then shuffle with both feet staying close together to a distance of more than 10 metres from the vehicle. (Advice from EnergySafe Victoria)
- You have a map of your farm which includes overhead (and underground) powerlines and consider this before working in these areas. You provide the map to contactors.
- You keep areas under and near power poles and powerlines clear.
- You plan vehicle, machinery and equipment travel paths to avoid overhead powerlines. You put up physical barriers, warning signs, barricades, visual aids to restrict access to areas under powerlines.
- If you have tall machinery you attach NO GO ZONE stickers near controls to remind operators of exclusion zones.

Do you have underground power cables?

- You use Dial before you Dig (1100.com.au) before any digging or excavation work and keep records available for use when necessary e.g. to show contractors .

Noise

Under the OHS Noise Regulations 2017, employers must ensure that their employee's exposure to noise does not exceed the exposure standard – loosely expressed as an average exposure to noise that is less than 85 decibels over an eight hour working day (LAeq.8h 85dB[A]) or that noise levels do not exceed a peak level of 140dB.

The regulations provide that having made attempts to eliminate or reduce the noise hazards in the workplace if there is still doubt as to whether there is a noise problem in the workplace the employer is then required to engage a suitably qualified person to assess the noise levels.

There are three questions that enable a business owner to conduct a self-assessment of the noise issues in their workplace. If an employer answers yes to any of these questions there is probably a noise issue and the employer will need to have the noise levels in their workplace assessed by a qualified person (e.g. an occupational hygienist).

Do you provide your employees with hearing protection e.g. earmuffs or plugs?

Noise injury and hearing loss is a significant problem in the Australian farming community. Hearing loss sustained from noise injury, can have disabling personal and social consequences for the affected person and their family.

Research has shown that around two-thirds of farmers have a measurable hearing loss, or have on average, hearing deterioration 10 to 15 years ahead of the rest of the population.

Noise injury in farmers occurs from prolonged exposure to on-farm noise hazards such as tractors, chainsaws, firearms and some livestock. Damage can be caused by prolonged and cumulative effects of noise over 85 dB over many years; or by instant trauma associated with peak noise levels over 140 dB. Exposure to excessive noise levels without protection, is an unacceptable risk to the hearing health of farming families.

Providing hearing protection alone does not end your obligations under the OHS Noise Regulations 2017.

Hearing protection should be provided as the last resort, once all other alternatives in the hierarchy of control, are considered to control the noise problem at its source e.g. substituting the noisy piece of equipment or engineering out the noise.

Do you have to raise your voice to speak when equipment is operating in your workplace?

In answering this question, consider a range of 1-2 metres. If you have to raise your voice to hear yourself speak it is probable that the noise levels emanating from the equipment have a high decibel rating, potentially exposing your employees to noise levels that exceed the exposure standard.

Have you or your employees ever complained of ringing in their ears after work activities?

Ringing in the ears or tinnitus, is an indicator of industrial/noise induced deafness. People can suffer tinnitus after attending loud events such as concerts or nightclubs. In these instances the tinnitus generally subsides over the following 12-24 hours. When people are repeatedly exposed to excessive noise levels the tinnitus does not go away, it is constant and permanent.

Have you engaged a competent/ qualified person to carry out an assessment of the workplace noise that your employees are exposed to?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions there is potentially a noise problem or hazard in your workplace. Where there is a potential noise hazard, under the OHS Noise Regulations 2017, employers are required to engage a suitably qualified person, an Occupational Hygienist or an Acoustic Engineer, to test the noise levels in their workplace. A listing of Occupational Hygienists can be found at https://www.aioh.org.au (The Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists).

The occupational hygienist will use a noise meter and possibly personal dosimetry devices fitted to your employees' overalls to assess the noise levels in your workplace and advise you whether the noise levels that your employees are exposed to exceed the exposure standard. If the noise levels exceed the exposure standard they must be controlled, having regard for the hierarchy of control.

There are practical limitations around having noise assessments performed in a farming environment. Unlike manufacturing environments, which have static machinery and constant sources of noise, farming environments are ever changing with different tools and a changing workplace configuration. It is recommended that members should reference the table which details indicative noise measurements and consult with their employees and subcontractors about these potential noise exposures.

Do you provide hearing tests for your employees?

If the noise levels are identified as being above the exposure standard and subsequently cannot be brought down to an acceptable level, the employer is then required to ensure that their employees' hearing is tested once every two years. The hearing tests are necessary to ensure that controls, such as hearing protection, are working effectively.

Employers should consult with their employees in relation to the results of hearing tests.

Employers should also have the noise levels in their workplace tested to avoid potentially expensive WorkCover (maims) claims for hearing loss. The last employer with whom the noise exposure occurs often has to pay compensation for the worker's full history of noise exposure.

Further Information and Advice

- Compliance Code Noise https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-noise

Indicative noise levels for machinery and plant

Table: Average noise levels and recommended exposure limits for common farm machinery / activisites (on 48 Australian farms)

Typical operating conditions / position of worker	Noise Level at the ear Average (& Range) L_{Aeq} dB(A)		Recommended limit of exposure without the use of hearing protection. *NB: Noise exposure risk for each activity in the day is cumulative toward the overall noise exposure risk.* **	
Air compressors	86 dB	(77 dB–95dB)	7 hrs	(15 mins - 8hrs+)
All terrain vehicles	86 dB	(84dB – 87dB)	7 hrs	(4 - 8 hrs)
Angle grinders	98 dB	(96 dB– 100 dB)	20 mins	(15 - 30 mins)
Others in workshop	90 dB	(87 dB– 93dB)	2 hrs	(1 - 5 hrs)
Augers	93 dB	(89 dB– 96dB)	1 hr	(30 mins - 3 hrs)
Bench grinders	99 dB	(94 dB– 104 dB)	18 mins	(5 mins - 1 hr)
Others in workshop	89 dB	(82 dB -96 dB)	3 hrs	(40 mins - 8 hrs)
Bulldozers	99 dB	(97 dB– 100 dB)	18 mins	(5 - 30 mins)
Chainsaws	106 dB	(104 dB – 107 dB)	3 mins	(2 - 5 mins)
Others stacking wood	96 dB	(93 dB– 99dB)	40 mins	(15 - 50 mins)
Circular saws	99 dB	(98 dB– 101 dB)	18 mins	(0 - 20 mins)
Others in workshop	89 dB	(84 dB – 94 dB)	3 hrs	(1- 8 hrs)
Cotton module presses	86 dB	(85 dB– 88dB)	6 hrs	(4 - 8 hrs)
Others in field (rakers)	84 dB	(82 dB– 86dB)	8 hrs	(6 - 8 hrs)
Cotton pickers	81 dB	(78 dB – 8 dB)	8 hrs	(8 - 8 hrs+)
Avg. increase with radio on*	1 - 3 dB		4 hrs - 8 hrs+	
Others in field (machines idle)*	83 dB	(77 dB– 89dB)	8 hrs	(4 - 8 hrs+)
Others in field (picker turning)*	94 dB		1 hr	
Dairies - herringbone (24 bay) pit	73 dB	(71 dB– 75dB)	No Limit	
Farm trucks	85 dB	(83 dB– 88dB)	8 hrs	(4 - 8 hrs)
Firearms	Lpk 140 + dB		No Safe Exposure	
Forklifts *	84 dB	(81 dB– 88dB)	8 hrs	(4 - 8 hrs)
Harvesters	83 dB	(75 dB– 91dB)	8 hrs	(2 - 8 hrs+)
Avg. increase with radio on*	2 - 5 dB		40 mins - 8 hrs+	
Others in field*	90 dB		2 hrs	
Irrigation pumps	100 dB	(96 dB – 104 dB)	15 mins	(5 -30 mins)
Motorbikes - 2 wheel*	81 dB	(70 dB– 92dB)	8 hrs	(1.5 - 8 hrs+)
Packing shed workers	80 dB	(78 dB– 82dB)	8 hrs+	(8 - 8 hrs+)
Pig handling - suckers*	109 dB	1 - 2 mins		
Pig sheds - manual feeding*	87 dB	(74 dB– 99dB)	5 hrs	(15 mins - 8 hrs+)
Shearers	86 dB	(84 dB– 87dB)	7 hrs	(4 - 8 hrs)
Others in shed	80 dB	(77 dB– 83dB)	8 hrs+	(8 - 8 hrs+)
Sugarcane harvester*	86 dB		7 hrs	
Increase with radio on*	2dB		4 hrs	
Tractors with cabins (all ages)	76 dB	(75 dB– 78dB)	No Limit	
Tractors with cabins 10 yrs+	81 dB	(77 dB– 84dB)	8 hrs	(8 - 8 hrs+)
Avg. increase with radio on	3 - 5 dB		4 hrs - 8 hrs +	
Others in field	85 dB	(80 dB– 90dB)	8 hrs	(2 - 8 hrs+)
Tractors without cabins	92 dB	(90 dB– 93dB)	1. 5 hrs	(1 - 2 hrs)
Others in field	82 dB	(78 dB– 86dB)	8 hrs	(6 - 8 hrs+)

* Sample sizes less than 5
** For example: If exposed to a noisy activity for half the recommended daily limit (e.g.Angle grinder for 10 minutes of a 20 minute daily limit),any remaining noise exposure in the day should not exceed half the recommended daily limit for another activity (e.g. A limit of 4 hours instead of 8 hours on a tractor with a radio).
NB: Range given is the 95% Confidence Interval of the sample for each type of machinery or activity.

Fatigue and Working Alone

Fatigue

Farming has peaks and troughs however at peak times like harvest or when livestock birthing occurs farmers and workers can be affected by fatigue. Fatigue is an acute and/or ongoing state that leads to physical, mental or emotional exhaustion and prevents people from functioning safely.

Fatigue isn't the same as being sleepy or drowsy. It's about pushing our bodies beyond their mental and physical limits day after day, with no time to recover. The major cause of fatigue is lack of sleep, so recovery occurs when adequate levels of sleep are taken.

Signs of someone being fatigued include irritability, nodding off (micro sleeps), reduced co-ordination, slowness to react, low energy/motivation and poor short term memory. Often fatigue leads to headaches and dizziness, frequent colds and making mistakes that are normally not made.

You may experience fatigue if:

- you had less than 6 hours sleep in the past 24 hours
- you had less than 12 hours sleep in the past 48 hours
- you will have been awake for 16 hours or more after a shift
- you've been exposed to extreme hot or cold temperatures
- you've had to concentrate for a long period

Where there is a risk of fatigue in your workplace you need to ensure you take steps to manage this and the risks that come from fatigue. You will need to consult your workers about what you plan to do and ask them for their suggestions. Typically the options to consider when you are coming into a period where fatigue is likely to occur would be looking to address the risk of fatigue by:

- planning ahead to roster on extra help when necessary
- rostering work in a way that maximizes the amount of sleep everyone gets
- rostering work where possible so less hazardous tasks are done in the dark or when the likely effects of fatigue occur
- reminding workers to take breaks whenever possible, do simple stretching exercises during the day, increase water intake, eat healthy snacks and limit caffeine and alcohol intake
- checking in with family, friends and workers during the day and towards the last part of long shifts
- educating workers on the signs of fatigue and getting them to speak up if they or their work colleagues are showing signs of fatigue.

When someone is impacted by fatigue they should not be driving home but be provided with an on-site option to stay the night. Fatigued workers should refrain from working alone until they have recovered.

Working Alone

Farmers know that agricultural work can be dangerous. When you work alone, the risks increase. If people don't know where you are when an accident happens, you may not be found for a long time. You may be trapped, injured and not in a position to help yourself.

Often you need to work alone on a farm, but a reliable means of emergency communication and emergency procedures can mean that you can get help quickly if something goes wrong.

Check-in procedures

Check in procedures could involve assigning a designated contact person to be responsible for checking on people who are working alone. For example, they could do call or text message check-ins every 2 hours or, where they have no other on farm contacts to consider setting up a buddy system with neighbouring farmers to check on each other several times a day via mobile phone or radio.

Whatever system is in place, everyone working and living at the workplace needs to clearly understand the procedures and what to do in an emergency.

Personal locator beacons

Personal locator beacons are similar to emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBS) used on boats, but are designed for use on land, and are small and portable. Their primary purpose is to send out a distress signal in an emergency. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority recommends personal locator beacons with a global positioning system, as these can help locate a person more quickly. It is also important to register it with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. Registration is free. You should always keep the personal locator beacon with you when working alone and not, for example, on the dashboard of the ute or tractor.

Emergency Plus

Where mobile phone coverage is reliable it is worth considering the Emergency Plus app. This app when used dial's 000 and provides a GPS location of where the call is coming from. It is free to download.

Maintaining a Safe Workplace

Workplace Inspections

Apart from the responsibility for identifying and assessing the potential for injuries to occur in the workplace, employers also need to ensure that they are maintaining a safe workplace. This is achieved in part by maintaining service records on plant and equipment, however there are some other steps that an employer can take to ensure that their workplace is maintained in a safe condition.

Are workplace inspections planned and undertaken to identify workplace hazards?

Employers are encouraged to develop and implement a process of inspecting their workplaces to identify hazards.

Suggestions for items that could be included on a housekeeping and hazard inspection list include:

- A check of the first aid kit to ensure that stock is adequate e.g. band aids, and current e.g. saline solution, and that the kit is in a presentable condition so that items can be easily located.
- A check of the fire extinguishers, not only to ensure that they are tagged as having been tested, but to ensure that access to them is not obstructed.
- A check that all electrical leads and RCDs have been properly tested and tagged.
- A check that all personnel on site are wearing the appropriate PPE.
- Check the condition of equipment such as grain silos and fuel storages for weathering and rust to prevent structural collapse.
- Check guards on equipment such as grinders and saws.

The creation of a housekeeping inspection checklist is an excellent exercise to engage employees in to get them involved in OHS, as is the subsequent rotating of the task of completing the checklist.

If so, are they done frequently e.g. weekly?

Once introduced, the housekeeping inspections should be conducted on a regular basis. The more frequently they are done ensures that problems are not allowed to exist for any lengthy period of time. At a minimum an inspection should occur on a monthly basis but more frequent (i.e. weekly) inspections are recommended.

Employers should keep the completed checklists as a record.

If a hazard is identified, is there a system for reporting the hazard, assessing the hazard and controlling the hazard?

Most employers state that if their employees tell them there is a problem or a hazard it is fixed right away. Sometimes however people forget or their busy schedule takes them away from addressing the problem.

It is highly advisable for employers to have a secondary means of reporting hazards in their workplaces. This can be in the form of a reporting form e.g. a hazard alert form, or a register e.g. an exercise book. Managers and supervisors should instruct their employees that whenever they make a verbal report of a hazard that they should also enter it onto the form or in the book.

Important information to be covered includes:

- the nature of the problem identified, by whom and when; and
- the manner in which the problem was fixed, by whom and when and how.

Managers/Supervisors can then check the forms or book at the end of the day to see if there have been any hazards reported. Reviews of entries into the Hazard Register and entries into the register of injuries book are an excellent activity to undertake either with line supervisors or with all employees at team meetings.

Purchasing

Is technical data, regulations and other information relevant to health and safety examined when purchasing i.e. meets Australian Standard?

In terms of ensuring a safe place of work it is important to ensure that any new plant and equipment introduced meets the Australian Standards and that it is accompanied by all of the necessary technical data and information. There are examples of some forms of plant and equipment e.g. vehicle hoists, that are imported from overseas that do not meet the Australian Standards.

Employers need to ensure that they buy safe. Examples of steps that an employer can take include:

- checking plant and equipment for decibel ratings that are below 85dB e.g.. compressors,
- inspecting for guarding and safety devices
- checking for Australian Standards logos on the equipment or the documentation.
- Reviewing SDS to avoid purchasing hazardous substances.

Never assume that the equipment you are buying meets the Australian Standards – always check.

Toolbox Meeting Script No. 6

How to talk to workers about noise and maintaining a safe workplace

To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicably, that he meets his duty under the OHS Act 2004 to consult with workers about matters that affect their safety Phillip from Philosophical Farms has decided to conduct monthly OHS toolbox meetings on each of his sites.

Phil knows that safety is discussed on a routine basis on his sites but that those discussions generally relate to the work that is being performed at that time. Phil has pencilled in the third Wednesday of every month to conduct his toolbox meetings to compliment the day to day discussions and to properly utilise his OHS systems.

The script

Gather around everyone, its toolbox meeting time" Phil announces.

"Did you realise that when you do your work that you can be exposed to a certain amount of noise, referred to as the exposure standard, before it starts to affect your hearing?" Phil asked.

"The level is 85 decibels over an 8 hour shift. For every three decibels over 85 the amount of time that you can be exposed for halves. So at 88 decibels you can be exposed for no more than 4 hours and at 91 decibels it's no more than 2 hours, and the higher you go you keep on halving."

"I bet you did not know that using a chain saw can generate anywhere between 104 and 107 decibels. There is only three minutes of use before hearing loss can start to occur. - Wear your hearing protection!" Phil stated firmly. "

Phil then reached for his register of injury book.

There are no injuries recorded in here. Terrific work, this is what we strive for" Phil stated.

"But hang on a second young lad; didn't you go down to the local clinic last week with some muck in your eye? Why did it not get recorded in the book?"

"This would give me a record of what's happened and should there be a need for WorkCover it will give clarity on what occurred. It will also make sure that whatever caused the injury gets fixed so that no one else gets hurt".

Phil then reached for his housekeeping inspection checklist.

"Just before the meeting I completed our normal weekly safety walk" Phil advised.

"I can see your leads are not tested and tagged…. I can see workers not wearing their safety gear… I can see them leaving their materials lying around waiting for someone to come along and trip over them"

"I am not having a go at you (yes I am) but do you not appreciate why we do these things? Why do we have toolbox meetings, why do we do these inspections?

"I am committed to making sure that I can do as much as I can to make sure that Philosophical Farms are safe. I need your help to make sure that the farm stays safe".

How does Phil record the toolbox meeting?

Phil records his toolbox meeting in his Toolbox Meeting Pad. Phil' records reflect the issues that he discussed and the names of those that were present on site during those discussions.

Note: An employer can get workers to sign off to indicate that they were present or they can simply record the names themselves. It does not matter how the names are recorded.

A sample of the minutes from this meeting are attached.

What does Phil do next?

Phil takes the weekly housekeeping inspection report and the minutes from the meetings and inserts them into his OHS folder in his office. For Phil this material constitutes a significant portion of his growing OHS system. The material that he has collated demonstrates that he has been proactive in engaging with his employees and subcontractors and consulting with them about matters that affect their safety.

Record of OHS Toolbox Meeting

Farm name:
123 Hort Lane, Livestockton

Meeting date:
Wednesday, 17 March 2021

Work group:

Distribution:
☐ Workers Notice Board

Meeting conducted by:
Phil, Director of Philosophical Farms

Attendance - all participants to be listed:
Tom Jones
Dick Tracey
Harriet Belafonte
Cecilia Rubblestone

Main subject of meeting:
Noise, Reporting of accidents and maintaining a safe workplace

Main issues covered:
Spoke to workers on site regarding:
☑ Made workers aware of hazardous noise exposures
☑ Reporting of injuries in register of injury book
☑ Housekeeping inspections and maintaining a safe workplace

Agreed actions:

Notes:

WorkSafe

WorkSafe Inspectors

WorkSafe Inspectors may visit your premises on any of the following basis:

- In response to an incident e.g. a WorkCover claim or a notifiable incident; or
- As part of an industry program e.g. campaigns on mobile plant in the farming industry; or
- In response to a call from any person (e.g. employee/s about an OHS problem or issue).

WorkSafe Inspectors have an immediate right of entry to your workplace. On arrival they will show an identification badge to identify themselves as a WorkSafe Inspector.

Generally, the first thing that an inspector will do is to conduct a walkthrough of the farm to identify the hazard/s that exists. Once they have completed this activity they will often seek a place to sit themselves at to write up their reports. WorkSafe Inspectors (Inspectors) often work out of their cars, armed with a laptop computer and portable printer. After issuing an Entry Report they will then issue any Notices that they deem appropriate in relation to the hazards that they identify.

Under the OHS Act 2004, WorkSafe Inspectors have been given the power to be more consultative and cooperative and therefore they may be able to give you advice on how to comply with their notices.

An inspector will always issue an Inspection Report detailing the purpose for their visit. If the employer can demonstrate that they have met their OHS responsibilities i.e. that the employer has complied with their legal responsibilities, the inspector will note that voluntary compliance has been achieved. There are four different types of notices that an Inspector can issue:

Prohibition Notices

As the name implies, a prohibition notice prohibits work. The issuing of a prohibition notice is an instruction to the employer that they cannot use a piece of plant and equipment or a substance, or engage in a particular activity until such time as they can demonstrate to the inspector that the piece of plant or equipment, or the activity, has been made safe.

A WorkSafe Inspector will issue a prohibition notice where they perceive that the piece of plant or equipment, or the activity, presents an immediate risk to the health and safety to either the employees involved or the public. A prohibition notice will apply until such time as the immediate risk has been addressed and the Inspector will then lift the notice and at the point work can continue safely).

Inspectors will often return to the workplace after they issue a prohibition notice to ensure that the notice is being adhered to. If an employer risks ignoring a prohibition notice they risk being prosecuted by WorkSafe.

Improvement Notices

This is the preferred mode of operation of a WorkSafe Inspector as it allows the employer to deal with the hazard themselves.

In issuing an improvement notice the inspector will specify that the hazard needs to be addressed by the time they return, which could be anywhere from a matter of days to a couple of months. If an employer is not sure of their ability to meet the inspector's deadlines they should bring this to the inspector's attention at that time. Quite often inspectors are willing to provide a little more time, depending on the seriousness of the hazard. Inspectors are realistic, but they are also reasonable.

Failure to meet an inspector's deadlines, without a reasonable excuse, also constitutes an offence, which sometimes leads to prosecution.

Infringement Notices

A WorkSafe Inspector can also issue an infringement notice. Under the OHS Act 2004, WorkSafe Inspectors have the power to issue infringement notices as an alternative to prosecution for lesser breaches of the Act or Regulations.

An infringement notice could, for example, be issued to an employer by an inspector for allowing a worker to operate a forklift without the appropriate high risk work license.

An infringement notice is an on the spot fine which can range between $1090.44 and $1817.40.

Non-disturbance Notice

An inspector may issue a non-disturbance notice to stop the disturbance, use, movement or interference with a piece of plant, substance or other thing at the workplace. In other words the inspector will be stating that you cannot touch or use the piece of equipment.

An inspector is most likely to issue a non-disturbance notice for the purpose of conducting a more detailed investigation into an incident. A non-disturbance notice can be applied for a period of up to seven days.

If an employer ignores a non-disturbance notice they potentially expose themselves to a significant financial penalty.

Internal Review

Most inspectors' decisions (or non-decisions) can be reviewed and either affirmed, varied or set aside and substituted with another more appropriate decision.

An inspector's decision can also be stayed (suspended) while the review is taking place. For example, a WorkSafe Inspector may form an opinion that an activity in a workplace involves a risk to health and safety and issue an improvement notice.

The employer may wish to contest the decision and ask for an independent internal review because they believe the activity is safe. Alternatively, an Inspector may form an opinion that an activity is safe and take no action. An employee affected by the decision (and in some cases a health and safety representative) may wish to contest the decision and ask for an independent internal review because they believe the activity to be unsafe.

The internal review is done by the Internal Review Unit (IRU). The IRU is separate from WorkSafe Victoria and decisions made by an Internal Review Officer (IRO) become a decision of the WorkSafe.

The review process is speedy and transparent. Most internal review decisions have to be made within 14 days; some have to be made within seven days after the application is made or in the case of a stay of an inspector's decision, within 24 hours.

The decisions of the IRO must be in writing and set out the reasons, findings and evidence used to make the decision.

If an eligible person is dissatisfied with the decision, they can then ask the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to review it.

Further information on internal review can be found on the WorkSafe website.

Planning and Implementing OHS

Following the completion of the consultancy, the volume of information and the raft of responsibilities that they are advised of, overwhelms many employers. The reality is that whilst the majority of the OHS regulations have been around for some time e.g. manual handling regulations have existed in Victoria since 1988, most employers in the farming industry simply have not known what has been expected of them.

Don't panic. Nobody expects you to have everything done by tomorrow and remember that you engaged the Victorian Farmers Federation with the intention of tackling your OHS responsibilities, so you have already taken the first step.

The process of identifying, assessing and controlling risks in order to comply with the Regulations doesn't happen overnight, but you have to start somewhere.

An OHS Action Plan should clearly outline your intentions, but also detail how you intend to meet your responsibilities. For example, meeting your OHS responsibilities for manual handling might, in summary, involve:

- Consulting with your employees and implementing a manual handling policy,
- Reviewing your WorkCover claims history and your injury records to identify manual handling incidents
- Identifying manual handling tasks in your workplace in consultation with your employees.
- Conducting risk assessments using the long version risk assessment tool
- Implementing risk controls following the hierarchy of control.

There is no set order in which the compliance has to be achieved.

If you have an OHS Action Plan in place the WorkSafe Inspectors will most likely conduct return visits to monitor the progress of its implementation, however, provided you are sticking to the plan you will probably be able to continue working at your own pace.

OHS Issues not covered in this handbook

The content in this OHS handbook covers the parts of the OHS Act and Regulations that apply to the majority of farming employers in Victoria.

The OHS Regulations in Victoria also provide duties for the performance of specific work activities including work involving the removal of asbestos and work performed with lead.

Asbestos

https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-managing-asbestos-workplaces

https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-removing-asbestos-workplaces

Appendix 1

If you have an elected employee health and safety representative (HSR), do you discuss OHS issues regularly with this person?

If you are approached by your employees in relation to the formation of designated work groups (DWG) or having a HSR, you are required to enter into discussions with your employees on the subject. Under the OHS Act 2004, failure to engage in negotiation with employees within 14 days of being approached on the formation of a DWG or the election of a HSR is an offence under the Act.

HSRs must be duly elected by their peers i.e. the employees they represent. All employees must be given the opportunity to nominate and vote. There is nothing in the OHS Act which precludes management from approaching employees to initiate discussions in relation to the formation of DWG or election of HSR. They cannot however be appointed by management.

Employers are required to notify WorkSafe of the identities of elected HSR and inform the Authority if the HSR resigns.

Once elected, HSR must, if requested, be permitted to attend a 5 day OHS training course, approved by WorkSafe. Under the OHS Act 2004 the employer is required to pay for this training. Beyond this initial course of training, under the OHS Act 2004, HSR must also be permitted to attend one-day annual refresher training courses.

After completing the initial 5 day training course, HSR are entitled to attend other training courses that are approved by WorkSafe.

Under the OHS Act 2004, HSR may also have a deputy HSR. The role of deputies is to act on behalf of the HSR in dealing with health and safety issues when the HSR is not able to do so e.g. when they are on leave. Deputies must also be duly elected by the persons that they represent and are also entitled to undertake the 5 day and 1 day refresher training courses.

The OHS Act 2004 also provides for multi-site and multi-employer HSR.

Powers of Health and Safety Representatives

Once elected Health and Safety Representatives have the power, under the OHS Act, to do any of the following:

- Inspect any part of a workplace in which a member of the DWG works after giving reasonable notice, or without delay in the event of an incident or immediate risk to health or safety.
- Accompany an inspector during a workplace inspection involving their DWG.
- Require the establishment of a Health and Safety Committee.
- If the member of the DWG consents, attend interviews on health or safety matters between that person and an inspector or employer.
- If the HSR is authorised to represent an independent contractor and that person consents, attend interviews on health or safety matters between that person and an inspector or employer.
- Seek the assistance of any person whenever necessary.

Appendix 2

Union right of entry

Farm businesses are typically small workplaces with smaller workforces and given the geographical isolation most farmers are unlikely to encounter union official.

It is important however to recognise that union officials do have legal powers to enter workplaces to inquire into suspected OHS contraventions and that offences apply to employers that hinder or obstruct officials in the exercise of their powers.

Union officials also have legal rights to enter workplaces for industrial purposes under the Fair Work Act. Businesses are advised to familiarise themselves with these rights.

VFF members are encouraged to contact the VFF Industrial Relations Department or Farm Safety Team for assistance with OHS Right of Entry issues.

Non-members should contact the WorkSafe Help Line on 1800 136 089.

Notes

Want more information

MAKING OUR FARMS SAFER

Victorian Farmers Federation

Victorian Farmers Federation
24 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
1300 882 833
members@vff.org.au