

SAFETY ON THE FARM

By Laura Dixon

While in college I worked for a major equipment chain, where part of my job was to oversee safety. This was a natural fit for me, as my parents had enrolled me in many farm safety day camps growing up. To make sure these shops were compliant on safety regulations, I relied heavily on checklists and DVDs from our insurance agent. I also began teaching short day classes to employees on Forklift safety, lifting safely, etc. In addition, I started a MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) database in each location so employees would have information on chemicals readily accessible. Simple things like adding fire extinguishers and first aid kits to service trucks were a way of mitigating risk.

As the next production year approaches, it is always a good idea to take a look at your farm and your employees to find your own way of mitigating risk. In my lending career, I have seen many loans that were necessary because farmers were sued or fined for safety violations. Accidental injuries are devastating to families and business, but are usually preventable.

Items you should inspect for hazards:

- Barns and Buildings, Animal facilities, Grain storage, Workshops, Chemical storage, Farm Machinery, Fuel storage.

While on your inspection, it is a good idea to take a second set of eyes with you to make sure that you don't miss something.

David W Smith, Extension Safety Program gives us an 11 page article/checklist on things to look for during your inspections. This can be found here: <http://agsafety.tamu.edu/files/2011/06/CONDUCTING-FARM-SAFETY-INSPECTIONS1.pdf>

Sample questions include (for the full 11 page checklist visit the link above):

BARNs AND BUILDINGS:

- Is a first aid kit available in this location?
- Are emergency phone numbers listed (police, EMS, etc.)?
- Are smoke detectors installed and working?
- Is the workplace free of litter/trash/ and other items that could start a fire?
- Are buildings free from flammable liquids like gas?
- Are stairs and ladders in good condition and have hand rails?
- Are stairs clear and free of slippery substances?
- Are passageways clear of items that could cause falls?
- Are protruding objects such as nails removed from walls/ railings?
- Is electrical wiring in good condition?
- Can the main electrical power source be locked out if needed?
- Is power equipment properly shielded? Are shields in place during equipment operation?
- Are low ceilings, beams, low doors, and hanging objects marked with warnings?
- Are doors and gates to hazardous areas (Manure storage, chemical storage, animal quarters, silos, etc.) kept closed and secured to keep out children and visitors?

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