DEVELOPING A SPRING CHECKLIST Meeting Kit

FARM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Many farming operations are still family owned, and because of that a lot of the occupational health and safety legislation doesn’t always apply to them if they don’t have paid employees or are small-scale operations.

Why it matters: A basic safety management program can start with a **spring safety checklist**.

While provincial legislation may not prescribe what farm operations need to have in place, **safety programs** help producers develop procedures and a safety program.

WHAT SHOULD BE ON THE CHECKLIST

There are categories that should be included in the checklist.

1. **Equipment and Manpower**

Having equipment running and ready to go is a big priority for spring time and an important item on the checklist.

Preventive maintenance is key with equipment, not just on a production level but on a safety level as well.

Manpower is always a challenge. Producers must plan for any increases to their human resources.

It’s important the workers’ health and mental states are ready for the hectic season.

Head into spring calm and prepared rather than stressed and panicky.

In spring and fall, where the pace and demand are high, fatigue factors into the equation. You need to plan ahead and make an effort to eat well and get as many hours of sleep as you possibly can. If you have the appropriate help for your

operation and the job tasks are dispersed evenly amongst everybody.

1. **Provide Training**

Pre-spring training should also be conducted for workers who are taking on new job tasks. It’s always a good idea to refresh everyone on procedures and health and safety measures to ensure everything runs smoothly and safely.

Training on equipment operation is critical. The No. 1 source of agricultural fatalities is machinery related.

A big issue on farms is working alone, which again requires some kind of plan in place.

Rural locations may have poor cell reception, so instead of relying on our mobile devices, it might mean going old-school and having a walkie-talkie system with the appropriate range.

Producers should also think about confined space entry. A trained bystander is needed who does not enter that confined space, whether it’s a grain bin, manure pit, seeder or what have you.

Livestock handling is another area where injuries often happen if people are not aware of the dangers.

1. **Children and Farm Safety**

A huge issue is making sure kids on the farm stay safe. This is achieved by creating safe play areas.

Childcare is a big concern in rural communities, which is often tied into the lack of manpower.

It includes educating children from an early age about what the hazards are and raising them in a safety-first culture.

Children should not ride on tractors – at all.

Once the kids are old enough to do farm chores, they must be properly trained to safely handle the tasks.

One can’t assume that kids know what they’re doing because they grew up on a farm.

THE CHECKLIST IS PREPARATION IN ACTION

Preparation is key to a productive operation.

- Is all equipment equipped with proper lighting and reflective markings?
- Do you have enough fire extinguishers and are they maintained?
- Are all tools in good working order?
- Have supplies been ordered for the upcoming season? (seed, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, fuel, feed, etc.)
- Is there enough staff to complete the amount of work?
- Have you provided staff with a documented safety orientation?
- Is everyone trained for the tasks they will be performing?

- Are there procedures developed for high-risk job tasks and does staff know where to find them?
- Is there an emergency plan in place?
- Are there enough first aid kits, are they stocked, and are they easy to access?
- Does everyone know what to do if they are injured?
- Is there adequate signage to help identify hazards on the property?
- Do any fences need to be repaired?
- Are all obstructions programmed into all GPS-guided equipment?
- Do barns and out-buildings have adequate ventilation and lighting?
- Is there a system in place to dispose of garbage and chemicals?
- Do you have emergency eyewash facilities installed in the appropriate places?
- Are all controlled products, chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, and medicines stored according to manufacturer recommendations and WHMIS 2015 guidelines?
- Is there a chemical inventory list for your operation and do you have current Safety Data Sheets (SDS)?

FINAL WORD

A spring checklist is a mandatory step in farm operations whether you are a small family-owned business or a huge agri–corporation. The only difference between these 2 operations is size and scale. Everything else remains the same.