

Farm safety code of practice:

Have you your copy of the updated version?

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The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) recently published a revised version of the "Code of Practice for Preventing Injury and Occupational Ill-Health in Agriculture". This document is more commonly known as the "Farm Safety Code of Practice".

The revised Code was developed with assistance from Teagasc and the Farm Safety Partnership. The original Code was first produced in 2006 following the passing into law of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (SHWW), 2005.

The revised Code reflects technical progress in the sector, changes in farming practice, equipment and accident trends since 2006. The revised code has a green cover to distinguish it from the previous version and is available from the HSA and Teagasc.

The revised Code came into operation on 1 July 2017. The old version will be phased out over 18 months from that date. This means that persons will have to complete the revised version by 31 December 2018.

The revised Code of Practice (COP) is designed to help farmers to meet their obligations under the SHWW Act 2005 in a straightforward and practical way. It focuses on the most common hazards and provides workable solutions that can be put in place with minimal or even zero cost.

The Code comprises two documents - a Guidance Document and a working Risk Assessment Document. The Guidance Document is available on the HSA and Teagasc websites while the Risk Assessment Document (RAD) is available to farmers from the HSA, Teagasc and consultants.

It is a legal requirement to have an up-to-date RAD, and a HSA inspector can inspect the document on a

farm visit. Completion of the RAD is a requirement for participation in Bord Bia Quality Assurance Schemes. Trained staff in both Teagasc and agricultural consultancies provide a half-day training on completion of the RAD. It is a requirement of the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) TAMS II scheme that applicants have completed the half-day training or the Green Cert in the five years prior to submission of a payment claim.

RAD evaluation

An evaluation of the original RAD and half-day training was conducted as a PhD study by me with the following main findings:

- Farmers view safety management as an important issue (99%).
- RAD is easy to understand (88%).
- Pie charts (97%) and pictures (96%) aid communication.
- Attendance at half-day RAD training is worthwhile (100%).

The data collected indicates that farmers found the document both easy to use and useful.

The study found that users filled the document meaningfully but to a limited extent with an average of three controls identified for implementation per farm. Attending half-day training led to a 40% increase in controls identified for action.

An on-farm study indicated strongly that farmers who implemented the controls they identified had safer farms overall. This suggests that both identification and implementation of controls on an on-going basis is the key to safety management.

In summary, actions needed to comply with the Risk Assessment requirement of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 are as follows:

- If you have already completed a RAD, fully complete and implement the new (green) RAD before 31/12/18



- If you have not completed a RAD, do so as soon as possible.
- If you have not attended a half-day training course on the RAD you are advised to do so as soon as possible, but it is not a legal requirement.

If your farm has more than three employees (count in the farmer, regular worker and family members who are regular workers), which make-up 5% of farms nationally, the legislation requires that a full Safety Statement be prepared.

Farm safety this autumn

In 2017, at least so far, has seen the trend of increased farm deaths continue. To the end of July 14 fatal accidents had taken place (provisional figure). Trends in farm fatal accidents indicate that they can occur at any time so vigilance is necessary in autumn and winter. Some of the most hazardous aspects of farming are:

Tractors and vehicles

Tractors and vehicle deaths account for 29% (nearly one in three) of all farm deaths.

- Being struck or crushed by a tractor/vehicle accounts for 73% (almost three-quarters) of vehicle and machinery farm deaths on farms.



Professor Jim Phelan, chairman of the Farm Safety Partnership; Martin O'Halloran, HSA chief executive; and Professor Gerry Boyle, Director of Teagasc.

Such accidents occur principally in or around the farmyard. It's a matter of being vigilant at all times particularly where there are blind spots or where a person can get crushed.

- Reduced speed reduces risk. Vehicles should also be secured when stationary by lowering equipment and applying brakes/handbrakes and applying additional controls if necessary. Vehicles can roll on even the slightest slopes.

- When accessing public roads make sure that the vehicle and licensing of the driver complies with the requirements of the Road Traffic Acts. In particular, ensure that there is adequate visibility at farm and field entrances to view on-coming traffic.

Farm machinery

Machinery related accidents account for 17% (almost one in six) of farm deaths:

- Becoming entangled in a power shaft or machine part accounts for about 22% (more than one fifth) of farm machinery related deaths. This is one of the most gruesome accidents to occur. Make sure that all power shafts and revolving machine parts are completely covered. This applies in particular to machinery such as vacuum tankers, agitators or

grain rollers augers which are used when the machine is stationary. The operator could be close to the moving parts. This is by far the most dangerous position for power shaft use.

- Turn off all machine moving parts before ever approaching them for maintenance or adjustment.
- Never get into a crush zone between a machine and a tractor to make adjustments, as crushing causes instant death. Watch out for heavy weights when folding in, or out, machinery as these can crush and kill.

Animals

Livestock accidents account for about 14 % (one in seven) of farm deaths:

- Bulls account for 27% (more than a quarter) of livestock related deaths. When separated from the herd bulls should not be left on their own in a shed or paddock. They should always be with companion animals.
- Cows and heifers now account for 50% (half) of livestock related deaths. Farmers should also be vigilant when dealing with suckler cows as getting between a cow and calf can provoke a cow attack. Always stay close to a fence or a vehicle to give you a means of escape.
- When treating animals, make sure that crushes and handling facilities

are adequate. In particular, never enter a crush with an animal.

Working at heights

Falling from a height (10%, one in ten) and collapsing loads (7%, one in fourteen) are major causes of farm deaths. Particular vigilance is required when working at heights. This applies particularly when tying loads of bales.

- Make sure that loader attachments are properly secured so that they don't become detached at height and collapse.
- Make sure that bales of hay or straw are securely stacked so that they cannot collapse.

Slurry/water

Drowning or slurry gas accounts for 10% (one in ten) farm deaths.

- Cover all slurry manholes and fence slurry tanks.
- Only agitate and move slurry on a windy day.

Further information on farm safety is available at the following websites:

- www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Agriculture_Forestry/
- www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/farm-management/farm-health-safety/