

# Ten ways to avoid a winter injury

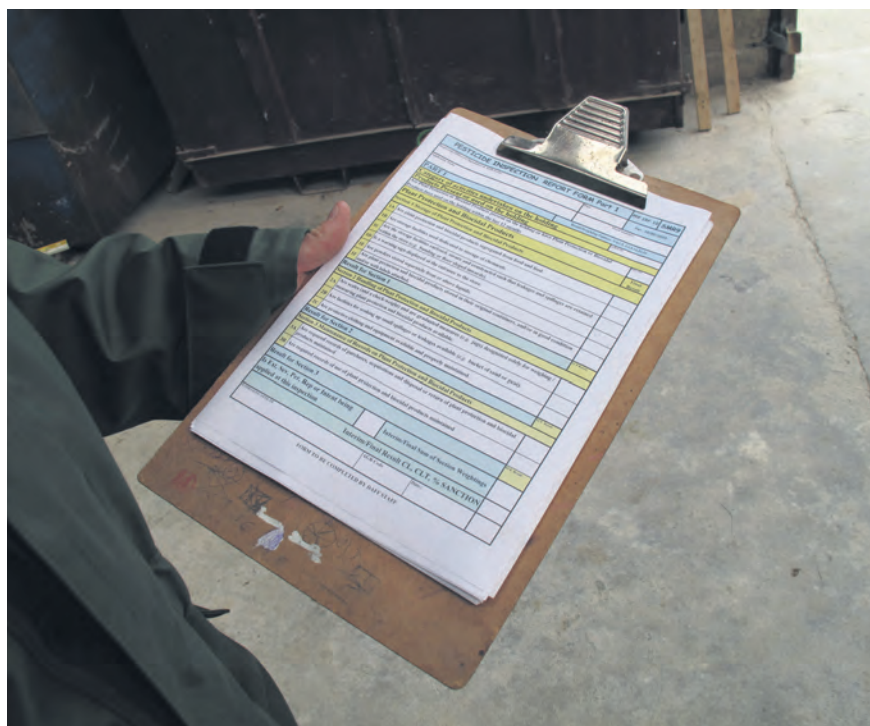
Using the HSA Risk Assessment document to carry out a seasonal review of hazards on your farm is good advice. We highlight some of the key areas to consider

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## 1 Check your machinery

Health and Safety Authority (HSA) data shows crush injuries in farmyards are a major contributing factor to deaths with tractors and farm vehicles. Make sure your handbrake is working and that you use it. It is also important to check starter motors and batteries on tractors and farm vehicles.

If they are performing poorly, it is very important to replace or repair them. Preventing farm workplace injuries involves having safe and well-maintained equipment and, vitally, adopting safe behaviours.

Operators of agricultural machinery should drive with caution and make sure loads are secure. Increase visibility by using lights and beacons, especially during bad weather or when light is low. Avoid busy roads whenever possible. Keep windows washed and clean.

## 2 Beware of livestock

Pay particular attention to bulls and cows around calving. Never enter a pen with an unrestrained bull and protect yourself from freshly calved cows.

## 3 Give yourself a break

It is more difficult to maintain concentration levels when tired, wet, cold

or hungry. Always take breaks, have a good diet, wear suitable clothing and always carry a mobile phone.

## 4 Prevent falls

Try to have clear routes around farm buildings, and have a stock of gritting material and salt readily accessible. A slip or fall can have devastating consequences. Take action to divert water away from routes that are used regularly. Something as simple as a channel to divert surface water can make a big difference.

## 5 Prevent falling objects

The collapse of bales from a shed store or bale stack can have devastating consequences. It is vital to ensure you avoid danger zones, such as adjacent to raised loaders holding bales. Always move bales safely.

The HSA has an information sheet on working safely with bales, which is

available at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

## 6 Get your electrics checked

Winter is a good time to have farm electrical installations checked by a competent electrician. Ensure that residual current devices (RCD) are in working order. Testing is essential to ensure that the switching mechanism in the RCD is working properly. Further information on safety with farm electrics is available at [www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/en/downloads/ESB\\_Farm\\_Safety.pdf](http://www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/en/downloads/ESB_Farm_Safety.pdf).

## 7 Install good lighting

Lighting in the farmyard and sheds will help improve productivity, time, safety and security. Replace blown bulbs and clean light covers.

## 8 Take care with heights

A safety platform with edge protection should be used when accessing



heights. If using a ladder, it should be sound and be secured at both the base and a height.

### 9 Fire safety

Check that hay and straw is stored separately from other buildings, particularly those housing fuels, agrochemicals and machinery. Fire spreads very rapidly and evacuation could be hazardous.

Have fire extinguishers at the ready and if a fire occurs, get to a safe area as quickly as possible and call 112 or 999 without delay.

### 10 Get organised

Good organisation leads to better time efficiency and safety, meaning that farmers can reduce the time taken to do a job.

Rushing to get a job done leads to injury, so taking time to plan your work week and prepare will not only help with work efficiency, but also help to reduce the chance of an accident occurring.

Long hours and busy times of the year lead to tiredness and rushing. This has an impact on how alert the farmer is and can lead to serious

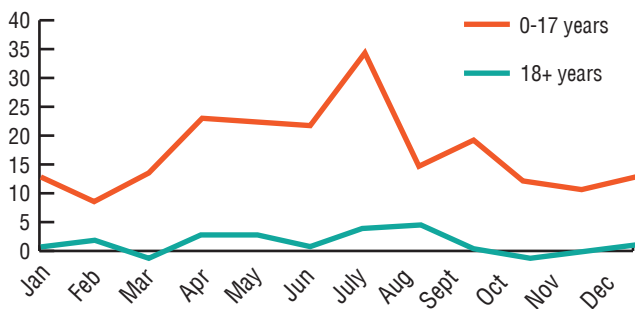
consequences.

Using contractors at busy times of the year or booking a relief worker is important in managing your workload.

Ensuring that the facilities are in good condition and the gates are hung properly will reduce the likelihood of an injury or an animal breaking out. Now is the time to get better organised.

Think about how you could be more organised, so that you can make the most of your time and allow for more time off.

Figure 1: Work-related fatalities by month, 2011-2020.



Be winter ready has produced a booklet entitled Be Winter-Ready, which includes advice. This booklet is available at <http://winterready.ie>.



### Targeted Agricultural Modernisation scheme

There is a wide range of farm safety equipment and facilities that are grant aided under the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Targeted Agricultural Modernisation scheme (TAMS).

To claim a TAMS grant, it is mandatory that all applicants have, prior to the submission of their claim for payment, the half-day farm safety code of practice or the FETAC Level (Green Cert).

Your claim for payment will not be processed until evidence of completion of the course is provided. Teagasc is currently taking bookings for half-day farm safety courses.

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