

Workshops

Perhaps more than any other occupation, agriculture involves a broad cross section of skills. Farmers and farm workers routinely perform workshop tasks that in other industries would be done by a variety of skilled trades people.

Repairs and maintenance of farm machinery, and associated workshop jobs, are among the most frequent causes of farm injuries.

Identify potential hazards and develop safe procedures for all workshop tasks, in particular training and supervision for young and inexperienced workers.

Spot the hazard

Check potential hazards in the structure of farm buildings, electrical fittings and fixtures, power tools and equipment, ladders and trestles, welding equipment and procedures, safe storage of hazardous materials and equipment, accessibility to children, and in procedures for lifting and carrying heavy and awkward weights.

Assess the risk

Check each potential hazard for the likelihood of it resulting in injury or harm. Make the highest risk items top priority for safeguarding. Assess possible risks in alternative safety measures.

Make the changes

- Ensure adequate working space for each job.
- Provide and use personal protective equipment where appropriate.
- Check there is sufficient lighting and ventilation.
- Keep walkways and exits clear.
- Update fire fighting and first aid equipment to meet current needs.
- Ensure fuel, compressed air, steam, electrical or other services are safely installed and maintained.

Tools and equipment

- Read the manual before using new tools and equipment.
- Follow instructions on safe procedures.
- Ensure power tools and equipment are properly guarded.
- Use angle grinders only for grinding and not for cutting. Safer power cutting tools are available.
- Ensure all guards and shields are kept in place during use.
- Use clamps and vices where possible to hold job items.
- Store tools safely to prevent damage and unauthorised use.

Ladders and trestles

- Before climbing, place a ladder's feet about a quarter of the ladder's length from the wall or top support.
- Before working high on a ladder, secure it to prevent it slipping sideways.
- Never place a ladder in front of a doorway unless the door is locked or guarded.
- Avoid standing ladders on drums, boxes or blocks.

Electricity

- Replace old fuse boxes with an RCD board that protects the whole building.
- Or, fix portable RCDs at power points where power tools are connected.
- When someone gets an electric shock and "locks on" to a live component, the power must be turned off before the person is handled.
- Check all power cords regularly to ensure insulation is intact, and that inner cabling is not exposed.
- Get rid of old, worn or faulty power cords.

Welding

- For maximum protection against eye injuries, wear goggles with side shields, as well as a welding shield or helmet.
- Protect skin areas from radiation burns, preferably with woollen or flame resistant canvas clothing.
- Never wear thongs or open footwear when welding. Shoes or boots should be rubber soled for non-slip and electrical protection.
- Obtain and follow safety guidelines on welding.