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Accident Prevention = Good Management Training for Employees

Development of accident prevention programs can mean personal gain to both employee and employer. The positive effects of a safe and healthful working place will give the employee more satisfaction in his daily work and a more secure feeling about his future working potential. The employer will benefit by more being accomplished, resulting in more profit, plus reducing concern about the consequences of a possible employee accident. The agricultural employer who is a good decision maker will be convinced of the worth of accident prevention training for his employees. Training and reduction of hazards in the work environment are good management steps to a more satisfying, more profitable enterprise.

The 1975 Idaho Farm Safety Survey* disclosed the victim in one-third of the worker-related agricultural accidents is an employee. An estimated 850 agricultural employees are injured in Idaho per year. Of these, 70 are likely to be women. There is an increasing broad range of accident producing tasks being assigned to women.

The task of employees and source of injury vary widely, the survey showed. The number of accidents and the severity of injury vary with work situations. Employees, for example, outnumber family members in falls and bumps associated with tractors. However, tractor operational accident victims reported in the survey are almost all family members. The wide variation in type of accident indicates the need for training for many tasks.

The severity of accident, as reflected by cost and time away from usual duties, covers a broad range. Employees are more prone to seek medical help for turned ankles, bumped heads, and skinned shins than would an operator or family worker. Employee accident situations which could result in death or handicapping injuries are quite numerous. Many

*In the survey 2,300 farm and ranch households were contacted throughout the year by volunteers within their neighborhoods. The local effort was organized and coordinated by the County Extension Agent and staff. The number of enterprises sampled represents 9 percent of the population. This is one of the most thorough and effective surveys taken in the western United States to date.

reports indicate that there is a lack of previous experience in the particular work situation. Although instruction does not completely offset lack of experience, accidents can be prevented by simple hazard-awareness training. The attitude and supervision of the employer can further minimize work-related employee accidents. Managerial safety instruction either direct or through crew supervisors can reduce inconvenience and time loss due to accidents.

Overall safety training coupled with good instructions relating to the specific task can reduce or eliminate agricultural employee accidents. An employee who understands how to do his task in a safe way accomplishes more. Fatigue is reduced when dangerous situations are avoided. Training in job skills and safety increases the satisfaction of both employee and employer. This training need not be formal but should prepare the worker for the task he is doing.

Employee Training — Basic Safety Recommendations

Common sense is essential to accident prevention programs. Awareness of and respect for hazards are vital to safety. Dangers exist in everything an individual does. Limitations must be placed on the risks expected. The probability of losing the gamble and suffering the consequence is much too high in relation to the possible benefits.

Some basic safety reminders may seem ridiculous to the experienced farmer or rancher. The worker, however, might be injured because he has not built up an awareness to hazards. The worker must become

accustomed to working in the proximity of particular hazards. A worker on a new job might be distracted from known hazards because he is concerned about learning his assigned duties. The proficiency of some workers will be below normal due to human limitations. Safety instructions and procedures training will have to be intensified accordingly.

Basic safety recommendations for various tasks are available from several sources. Safe procedures are in the owner's manuals for tractors, field and farmstead equipment. Accidents occur when simple reminders such as replacing shields are ignored. National Safety Council publications are another source of accident prevention materials and are available through local Cooperative Extension Offices. Safe use of pesticide instructions are printed on the labels of containers. Most printed recommendations parallel Occupation Safety and Health Act standards. OSHA publications can also be useful. "Using Anhydrous Ammonia Safely", for example, is an excellent teaching tool. Use of the designated precautions can help prevent employee accidents when handling this dangerous chemical.

OSHA Standards and Employee Training

The OSHA machine guarding standard only specifies keeping in place those guards that were supplied with the machine. Guarding has to meet the standards on new machines and warning devices for rotors which continue to turn are part of new equipment. New tractors, under another standard, are required to have roll over protection. No added installation is required on tractors in use. However, both of these OSHA standards specify that the employee must be instructed in safe operation and maintenance of the equipment. Tractor operator training came into effect June 1, 1975; machine operator training, October 25, 1976.

The "General Duty Clause" of OSHA states that each employer under the Act has the general duty to furnish each of his employees . . . employment free from recognized hazards causing, or likely to cause, death or serious physical harm; and the employer has the specific duty to comply with safety and health standards of the Act. Under this clause training can be essential even though it is not specified in a particular standard. Some instruction, for example, will be needed for an inexperienced employee to safely load livestock on a truck. The employment — loading cattle — may not be safe due to lack of training.

An employee who is seriously injured may file a complaint which might result in a citation. Exemptions related to number of employees only apply to record keeping. An employee complaint alleging the existence of an "imminent danger" which has caused a serious accident will result in an OSHA inspection. Any fatal accident or an accident where 5 or more employees are injured must be reported to OSHA within 48 hours. The maximum OSHA penalty for citation is \$1,000.

Employee Accident Risk Alternatives

Agricultural employers have several management alternatives in regard to financial risk for employee injuries. They must make a decision to transfer the risk by carrying adequate insurance coverage or workman's compensation or assume the risk themselves.

Most farmers and ranchers are exempt from compulsory workman's compensation. They may, however, choose to use the protection. Employers covered by workman's compensation have liability protection when employees are injured on the job. Workman's compensations also includes disability and death benefits as well as medical coverage for work-related accidents and illnesses.

The farmer or rancher may choose to carry liability insurance coverage for protection from loss due to civil suits. He may carry this separately or to increase his coverage above that of the workman's compensation plan. The employer may also cover the employee under hospitalization, disability and life insurance protection plans. Under the latter, liability need not be established before the employee or his family can receive benefits. The agricultural employer may also carry extended liability insurance for himself and his employee for off-premises errands.

Agricultural employers should contact their insurance agent, accountant and/or attorney to determine the most feasible method of protection. They must be prepared to assume the risk themselves if they do not have protection.

The best risk protection, of course, is to have no accidents, and the first line of defense of the agricultural employer should be accident prevention training for his employees.
