

Hints for Harvest Safety from FarmWeb



Photo shows Elaine Simons, Chief Executive of FarmWeb

Following the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) recent announcement of an increase in the number of farm related fatalities, FarmWeb, the network of agricultural insurance brokers, has issued a list of "hints for harvest safety" in a bid to help cut the number of future tragedies.

The 2009/2010 figures issued by the HSE (30 June) showed an increase in the number of deaths of agricultural workers to a total of 38, compared with the previous year's record low of 25. Graeme Walker, HSE Head of Agriculture has branded it: "the most dangerous industry in which to work" and HSE Chair, Judith Hackitt has told farmers to: "wake up to the enormous toll of death and injury".

Voicing her concern, FarmWeb's Chief Executive Elaine Simons said: "The increase is truly shocking and often it's a case of simply being in too much of a hurry and we can all relate to that. Yes, it's particularly stressful at harvest and the temptation to cut corners is high, but it's just not worth it. The cost of deaths and severe injuries to families, individual businesses and the industry as a whole is unacceptable, so I urge all farmers, to take time to read through this list and if this prevents just one accident, it's worth it".

Advice from FarmWeb

- ❖ **Casual staff** – the number of casual staff employed increases at busy times such as harvest, make sure they are properly trained and briefed for the tasks they are expected to undertake.
- ❖ **Moving large equipment** – be aware of the legislation relating to moving wide vehicles whereby any vehicle, for example a combine, over 3.5 metres wide, when travelling on public roads, should have another vehicle accompanying it. In addition, where the journey is more than five miles, the police should be notified in advance. *

When driving large or lengthy equipment such as combines or tractors and trailers on the roads, make sure other drivers are easily aware of your vehicle – check flashing beacons are working on both the front and rear of the vehicles – particularly important for long vehicles - and put marker boards both back and front.

- ❖ **Lock it Don't Lose It** – when working under pressure, it's all too easy to forget to take keys out of vehicle. Take an extra second to remove keys or if using blue ray

technology, make sure staff likely to use the vehicle all have a key. Remember, leaving keys in vehicles is likely to negate insurance cover.

- ❖ **Keep it clean** – ensure windows, lights and ventilation equipment are kept clean so the driver or operator's visibility is as good as it can be.
- ❖ **Fire** – is a huge hazard in the harvest field so fit small extinguishers to tractors and equipment - it may provide valuable extra minutes before the fire brigade arrives, or even save a life.
- ❖ **Water** – consider putting a temporary water bowser or tank in the field where work is taking place. Again, in case of fire, it could buy you crucial extra time.
- ❖ **Don't risk it** – it's frustrating when machinery breaks at a busy time but don't be tempted to rush in to fix it. Take an extra second or two to disconnect the power so there are no moving parts before tackling the problem. If possible, alert someone as to what has happened and what you are planning to do. That way, if a major problem occurs, you will have someone to assist and, if necessary, raise the alarm.
- ❖ **Don't be saggy and baggy** – loose, saggy clothing is a magnet for moving machinery, so make sure your clothes are not going to prove a danger to you. If you wear a tie, make sure it is a “clip on”.
- ❖ **Guard it** – ensure power shafts, augers etc are properly guarded - again a flapping sleeve could be disastrous.
- ❖ **Secure it** – make sure your load is secure, even if only travelling a very short distance. Loads that are not risk spillage and roll over.
- ❖ **Look Up** – be aware of overhead power lines when tipping trailers or moving equipment which could touch.
- ❖ **First Aid Kit** – FarmWeb provides a free first aid kit to clients as part of its risk management provision. Make sure you have one close at hand – behind the tractor seat is a good idea.
- ❖ **Shifting Sands** – stored grain is like quicksand, so never walk across it without attaching yourself to a secured rope, and ideally have someone on firm ground nearby to help if necessary.
- ❖ **Don't Take a Tumble?** - Ladders are often in everyday use on farms, but make sure you never use an aluminium ladder on a metal surface, such as a metal floored trailer. The grip is likely to be minimal and the risk of falling is high.
- ❖ **Play Time** - and finally, for some, harvest isn't hard work at all. Children frequently see the harvest field as an enticing and exciting new play area. Be aware of this and of youngsters by keeping a look out, and ensure they are kept safe.

* Please see link to the legislation relating to wide loads on the public highway

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031998.htm#24>

ENDS

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EDITORS' NOTES

FarmWeb Limited was established in 1996 as specialists in agricultural insurance cover. The company has seen year-on-year growth, with current sales grossing over £35 million.

FarmWeb trades solely through independent brokers, operating through more than 100 offices in the UK.

FarmWeb provides brokers with exclusive agricultural insurance policies arranged through insurer NIG ensuring that they benefit from a number of sustainable advantages.

In 2003 FarmWeb was appointed to provide agricultural insurance services to customers of the Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest on a national basis.

The company is based at Green Farm Business Park, Quedgeley, Gloucester and the Chief Executive is Elaine Simons.

For further information, visit www.farmweb.co.uk