

WLN Seminar March 29, 2012
Workplace Safety: Innovative Practices and Strategies for Critical Safety Thinking



Speaking Notes

Presenter: Laurel AITKEN, Farm Safety Coordinator for Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

The **Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development** farm safety program is an awareness and education program. Our mission is to promote health and safety to farm families and their workers, motivating and enabling them to make informed decisions about managing their personal risk.



Who is our client?

The majority of our farms are still family run. They may have seasonal workers but otherwise run the farm on their own or in partnership with family members, spouses and children. Many large operations include feedlots, hog operations, and others. Other facts:

- *The average age of Alberta's farmers is 51yr of age.*
- *Children are usually involved in farm work from a fairly young age.*
- *Most farms are isolated geographically. When it comes to injuries this can mean delayed response time for emergency services putting them at higher risk.*



What are the injury Statistics?

- *On average, 17 die each year in Alberta as a result of an agricultural work-related injury.*
- *The overall death rate for Alberta, based on the years between 1990-2006 is 8.7/100,000 ag population/year.*
- *The majority (91%) of the deaths are males (of all ages),*
- *When looking at the deaths by age group, we see that agriculture is very different from most industries in that our stats include ages 1 thru well over 80.*
- *A whopping 75% of the deaths were machine related,*
- *The top machine related causes were rollovers, run-overs, pinned or struck by a machine and entanglements. Our industry has some very large machinery designed to cut, wrap, grind, compress..... We also have a large number of old tractors still in use that are missing the safety engineering of more modern machines such as Rollover Protective structures or training seats on tractors.*
- *The Alberta injuries are very similar to those rights across Canada – these are definite trends that have not changed much over 20 years.*
- *According to information from the Canadian Ag Safety Association, Farming is in the top 10 for stressful jobs (weather uncertainties, financial issues and incredibly long work hours all contribute to this). On top of this agriculture is rated as the third most dangerous occupation in Canada.*



What about OHS Legislation?

- *Most primary agriculture is exempt from legislation.*
- *WCB is available but voluntary and there is a very low uptake by the agriculture industry.*
- *Some farmers will have disability and loss time insurance as part of a commercial insurance package.*
- *Some agriculture is included in the legislation - food processing, greenhouses, mushroom farms, nurseries and a few other - mainly operations that have a higher level of processing involved. However due to the geographic isolation of the operation, the likelihood of inspections and enforcement are not a big threat/motivator to these operations.*

How do we motivate, educate and move the farming population towards behavior change?

Our challenge is:

- *that we have many different clientele, differences in size and types of farms, and a wide range of ages and levels of knowledge.*
- *Secondly, we do not have the power of legislation to enforce any safety practices.*

Goal:

Given the diversity of our clientele, the Farm Safety Program has set a goal to provide **Life-Long safety education** for rural Albertans.

- *Preschoolers thru to seniors need age appropriate messaging, education and training options that suit their needs.*
- *This is to ensure that farm families are receiving the information they need at every age and stage of development as they grow from children living and playing on farms to youth working for their parents to owner/operators who are responsible for the OHS policies on a farm operation.*
- *Other clients would include farmworkers who may have no background in farming and therefore little knowledge of the hazards that exist.*

Alberta Agriculture uses awareness and education to motivate our clients to make safety a priority. In short, we are trying to develop a culture of safety in our industry.

Our Approach:

1. **Awareness** through:
 - Media, community events, Canadian Ag Safety Week, campaigns , Interactive Displays and promotional items for community use.
 - A new campaign just launched during CASW called “**I Have a Role**” will encourage discussion amongst rural Albertans on their individual responsibilities for agricultural safety, whether it's the role of a parent, farm owner, worker, equipment dealer or member of a community group. This reflects the fact that the only way we can move whole communities towards a culture of safety is for every individual to do their part.
2. **Education** – we provide print and online resources , as well as CD/DVD resources with everything from one page fact sheets to full manuals. We also work very closely with the AFSC based in southern Alberta to get safety presentations into rural schools.
3. **Training** – we have some new developments.
 - Our policy has always been that Training of new employees is good business and an important area of risk management on any farm and to that end our print and online resources along with a CD entitled FS. It's *No Accident* have been available for the farm operator to use on farm as necessary when training new employees – often seasonal.
 - In the past few years we have taken our commitment to training up a notch with the newly developed Safethink – Agriculture. ARD was able to work with [Human Development Consultants](#) to take the original

SafeThink course and apply it to the agriculture industry. We now have our own manual and have been able to provide training for rurally based safety instructors. As interest grows we hope to have instructors across the province that can work with farm owners and rural organizations to run the courses.

4. **Partnerships** – this is key in order to leverage our program to reach a larger audience. Our clients are spread right across the province. ARD has four farm safety coordinators. Therefore, Partnerships and cooperation are essential.
 - ARD Farm Safety Program partners with private industry and rural org's such as the WRAP Alberta 4-H, the Alberta Farm Safety Centre , AB Agricultural Societies, and Community Health Units.
 - We also network and cooperate with like-minded organizations such as AB.Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR) , SafeCommunities, AB Transportation and our own AB Agriculture industry specialists and programs including the Green Certificate farm training program. The more our clients hear the message , the more likely they are to take it on.

5. **Resources and Programs** - Promotes the idea of life-long learning...
 - **Preschoolers to age 9** – we have the Farm Safety Kids Club, with Interactive displays and activities all available to our partners and rural communities for use. This age group is most likely to get hurt as a bystander on the farm being in the working area of the farm with parents while they work. The secondary audience is the parent.
 - **Age 10 – 14 yrs** - Safety Wranglers . This is a new program aimed at the preteen who is usually actively involved in farm work. It will include interactive demos and displays/ activities that can be used by community or school groups to engage this age group. This is the age of most 4-H members which provides us with a great captive audience at club meeting etc.
 - **Youth/young adult – 15 – 23 yrs** – Safety Up program – it uses advertising and social media to speak to youth including Facebook, Twitter, You-tube videos and key-codes. As well we have developed our print materials with messaging that speaks to their interests.
 - **Adult Resources** – online and print resources available for the owner operator to be able to put together a safety plan for his operation. We use media and attendance at rural tradeshow and events to keep safety top of mind for the farm owner or employee. The idea is that a farmer can access our resources or staff for help in putting a safety plan together or for information on training employees right down to specifics such as how to properly handle livestock medications or use of personal protective gear when applying pesticides.



Submitted by Laurel Aitken - Laurel.Aitken@gov.ab.ca