



Safe FARM

Health and safety information for Alberta farmers

Spring 2014

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Farm flooding preparedness

By Kenda Lubeck, ARD Farm Safety Coordinator

A particularly snowy winter and subsequently wet spring thaw brings with it the chance of seasonal flooding, especially in southern Alberta. The best way for rural Albertans to prepare for this type of disaster is to be aware of the hazards and take action before there is a problem.

your area, it is important to secure potable water as ground water drinking sources could be contaminated. Flood waters may seep into well casings, contaminating well water, and dugout water could be contaminated as well. Enough potable water should be kept in reserve for humans and

The number one thing to minimize damage is to locate the potential hazards on your property and their relation to water sources. This includes run-off on the property. Potential hazards may be manure, fuels and lubricants, pesticides, herbicides, batteries and sources of electricity.



Spring flooding primarily occurs in low-lying areas so if you suspect your property is in danger from heavy spring run-off, make appropriate plans in advance.

Farm sites should be constructed so that the risk of these contaminants being washed into a water source is minimized. Used chemical containers should be removed from dugout banks and disposed of properly, surfaces around water wells should be mounded up to prevent water from running down the casing, and manure piles should be clear of run-off areas to prevent contamination.

animals until all affected wells can be shock chlorinated or the treatment systems for dugout water have been followed. The water sources should then be inspected to ensure they are operating properly.

As part of being prepared, farmers should identify high elevation areas on their property where they could relocate or store animals, valuable property or any potential hazards that are portable. This location may

If a flood warning is issued for

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Farm Safety Tips

- Consider implementing a health and safety management system on your farming operation. This involves the use of processes to decrease the risk of injury and illness. It requires investment from you, your family and any workers to be successful. Go to www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farm-safety for more information.
- When working with cows, particularly during calving, always plan an escape route or refuge area in advance. It's best to work in teams of two or more people, or at least have access to a mobile phone or other communication device so you can call for help if needed.
- Do a thorough check on your farm property before starting this year's spring work. Changes to the land from the snow melt and runoff may create dangerous wash outs and scattered debris. Flag and correct any hazardous areas and remove foreign objects before using heavy equipment or putting livestock out to pasture.
- The term "sharps" refers to needles, scalpels or broken glass from medicine bottles. Unintentional exposure to sharps can be a serious matter. Always dispose of sharps in an appropriate container clearly marked with a warning label. Never reach into a sharps disposal container for any reason.
- Noisy equipment and distance between workers can create misunderstandings during farm work. Consider adopting universal hand signals to communicate on your farm. Take the time to ensure everyone understands the hand signals, including children. Go to www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety for more information.

Avoid spring-related farmer fatigue

Source: ARD Agri-News

It was a snowy winter that didn't want to end. With spring finally here, farmers are now finding themselves in the middle of a seeding and spring-work frenzy as they aim to get seed and other inputs into the soil. The risk of having a late crop looms.

However, with all of the rushing and pushing limits there is a far greater risk that would undoubtedly trump the gloom of a late crop: the risk of serious injury due to fatigue.

The 2001 Canadian Census of Agriculture found that fatigue is a major factor in causing farm-related injuries.

"Too many farmers push themselves, especially during the really busy times," says Kenda Lubeck, Farm Safety Coordinator for Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

"Too often, it's a case of 'I'm going to finish that field tonight even if it kills me'. Health and safety is a worker's most valuable asset – nothing should come before."

Many times fatigue creeps up on a person and this makes it difficult to recognize. In addition to feeling sleepy and



Recognize and address the signs of fatigue. This is particularly important when performing hazardous tasks, such as operating heavy equipment.

tired, some common symptoms of fatigue include:

- Headaches, dizziness, blurry vision
- Slow reflexes and reactions, poor concentration
- Feeling irritable, moody and short tempered
- Aching, weak muscles

"We often see safety as being all about equipment and guards," says Lubeck, "but the most important safety tool a person can have is their attitude and subsequent decisions."

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Dehydration is an energy zapper. Drinking and eating go hand-in-hand in giving your body the fuel it needs to stay energized both mentally and physically.

Safety for farm equipment on Alberta highways

By Gordon Ellert, Alberta Office of Traffic Safety Regional Traffic Safety Consultant

The following list of questions and answers clarify traffic rules when using a tractor or other farm equipment of the highway. Note that the definition of a highway includes any public road in Alberta. Farmers using a highway to transport farm equipment must obey the law.

Where applicable, reference to specific legislation has been added at the end of the answers. This information can be used as a guide if you would like to reference the legislation.

Q: What am I required to do when I meet another vehicle driving the opposite direction, and passing will be difficult?

A: Stop your vehicle before you pass the other vehicle. Look to see how you can pass safely. If needed, have the other vehicle pass while you give directions. *Alberta Regulation (AR) 304/2002 sections 14 and 15*

Q: What are the laws regarding the dimensions of farm equipment on a highway?

A: Height: the maximum height of the farm equipment and any load must not be higher than 4.15 metres (13.5 feet) which is measured from the surface of the highway. However, you may qualify for a permit if your load is higher.

Length: The total length of farm equipment and its load on the highway cannot be longer than 23 metres (75 feet). If your load is longer, you may qualify for a permit.

Width: The normal width of a vehicle or trailer cannot be wider than 2.6 metres (8.5 feet). If your load is wider, you may qualify for a permit.

The width can go up to 3.8 metres (12.35 feet) if it is being towed by a farm tractor and the trailer is being used to move farm operations



Self-propelled equipment, such as tractors, must have certain features including working lights, brakes, and rear-view mirrors before they can be taken on public roads.

materials from one farm or field to another farm, or from one portion of a farm or field to another portion of the farm or field. *AR 315/2002 part 1, section 7(b)*

If the load is wider than 2.6 metres (8.5 feet), attach flags at the widest part of the vehicle or load during daylight and warning lights during darkness. *AR 315/2002 part 1, section 6*

When towing farm equipment with a tractor or other self-propelled farm equipment, a permit is not required if the width exceeds 2.6 metres. Additionally, flags and lights on the widest points of the equipment are not required but are recommended to improve visibility.

Q: Where can I get more information and permits?

A: You can get more information and permits at the Transport Engineering branch of Alberta Transportation. The phone number is 1-800-662-7138. You can also ask them how to get information on line.

Q: What are the size rules for moving hay?

A: You must obtain a permit for moving hay if the load is higher than 4.15 metres (13.5 feet) or wider than 2.6 metres (8.5 feet). *AR 315/2002 part 1, section 8*

Q: What are the size rules for moving grain bins?

A: You must obtain a permit when moving grain bins if the load is higher than 4.15 metres (13.5 feet) or wider than 2.6 metres (8.5 feet). *AR 315/2002 part 1, section 8*

Q: What are the rules for a farm tractor that has a dozer blade? How wide can the dozer blade be?

A: If your rubber-tired farm tractor with a dozer blade is wider than 2.5 metres (8.5 feet), you must attach flags on the sides of the blade in daylight and warning lights in darkness. *AR 315/2002 part 1, section 8*

Q: What should a warning flag look like?

A: Warning flags must have a

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rectangular shape and be red or orange in colour with sides that are at least 400 millimetres (16 inches) in length. *AR 315/2002 section 1(eee)*

Q: What kind of warning lights are needed?

A: Warning lights must be amber (yellow) at the front and red at the back. The lights must be bright enough to be seen 150 metres (500 feet) away in normal darkness. *AR 315/2002 section (fff)*

Q: Do I need dimensional or wide load signs when towing or hauling farm equipment?

A: No. However, signs are recommended when you are hauling farm equipment that is wider than 3.05 metres (10 feet). The signs should be placed at the front of the towing vehicle and back of the towing vehicle or trailer.

Q: Are pilot vehicles required when towing or hauling farm equipment?

A: No. However, a pilot vehicle is recommended if you are hauling farm equipment that is wider than 3.85 metres (12.5 feet).

Q: What does the law say about self-propelled farm equipment?

A: The following are requirements for self-propelled farm equipment:

- There must be two headlights on self-propelled farm equipment. The lights must be turned on while on the highway in the dark. *AR 304/2002 division 13, section 55.1*
- The self-propelled farm equipment must have clearance lamps and be used when the width is greater than 2.6 metres (8.5 feet). The lamps must be attached at the back. *AR 304/2002 division 13, section 55*
- You must be able to see the tail lamps 150 metres away. They must be on when the headlights or auxiliary driving lights are on. *AR 122/2009 division 2, section 13*
- If your self-propelled farm equipment has signal lights, they must be in working order. If the self-propelled farm equipment did not come with signal lights, they are not required by law but are recommended for safety. *AR 122/2009 section 23(1)*
- The self-propelled farm equipment must have two brake lights. *AR 122/2009 section 18*
- Self-propelled farm equipment must have serviceable brakes. *AR 122/2009 part 1, division 2, section 54(3)*
- Self-propelled farm equipment does not have to have reflectors, but

reflectors are recommended.

- Self-propelled farm equipment does not have to have reflective tape, but reflective tape is recommended.
- The self-propelled farm equipment must have rear view mirrors. *AR 122/2009 section 74*

Q: What is the law when moving a load that hangs over the end of a vehicle or trailer?

A: If the load hangs over more than 1.5 metres (five feet), you have to attach a red or orange flag to the back of the load. The flag must be 300 millimetres (12 inches) square.

Q: When do I need a slow moving vehicle sign?

A: You need a sign when you are travelling slower than 40 kilometres per hour. Attach the sign at the back of the self-propelled farm equipment and towed implement.

Q: Do I need to wear a seat belt when driving self-propelled farm equipment on a highway?

A: If the equipment came with a seat belt, you must wear it. *AR 122/2009 section 84*

Q: Can I get charged for distracted driving and impaired driving when driving farm equipment on a highway?

A: Yes. If you would like more information about distracted driving and impaired driving laws, go to:

- <http://www.saferoads.com/drivers/impaired-driving.html>
- <http://www.saferoads.com/drivers/driver-distraction.html> ☀



Machinery travelling slower than 40 km/h must have a slow moving vehicle sign attached to the back of the self-propelled farm equipment and any towed implement.

“Safety is not an intellectual exercise to keep us in work. It is a matter of life and death. It is the sum of our contributions to safety management that determines whether the people we work with live or die.” – Sir Brian Appleton

Farm flooding preparedness continued from page 1

also need to house people in severe circumstances. Identifying a hill top that is large enough for all important items is vital.


Any dams or canals on the property should be inspected annually. The inspection should include a check on the structural integrity of the item and identify any required maintenance issues. If the soil at the base of a dam is saturated, this may indicate that the dam could collapse in the event that any additional water or other such pressure is added. In some cases it may be valuable to engineer a spill way in the dam or canal to alleviate pressure and minimize the risk of losing the entire system.

It is vital that farmers and land-owners have a plan in place prior to the threat of floods. A Rural Emergency Plan is a great tool to help farmers make a plan. This kit, available from Alberta Agriculture

and Rural Development, helps farmers map out their farmstead, including the locations of all hazardous substances, emergency equipment supplies, water run-off information, emergency phone numbers, checklists and any other key information emergency personnel might need. This will help ensure fast and effective decisions in the case of an emergency.

In preparing for any kind of emergency or natural disaster, it is important to have a communication plan or strategy with your family or partners. Take into consideration that in flood conditions there may be no access to telephone land

lines or power for extended periods of time. Discuss these situations ahead of time so everyone is aware of the plan.

More information on a Rural Emergency Plan is available online at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety. 



Make sure your emergency flood plan includes a dry area and clean drinking water for your animals.

Avoid spring-related farmer fatigue continued from page 2


That could mean taking a 20 minute snooze when you are exhausted, or having another person lined up to spell you off.”

It’s important for farmers to recognize things they can do to ward off fatigue:

- Get adequate sleep. This means parking your worries at the bedroom door and regularly getting a good night’s rest.
- Eat nourishing food to keep your mind and body sharp.
- Stay hydrated with plenty of water. Refrain from drinking too much caffeine and any beverages containing alcohol as they will cause or worsen instances of dehydration.
- Incorporate some healthy activity in your day’s work. Many times spring work equals long hours

operating the same equipment. If you find yourself in the cab of a tractor for hours on end be sure to stop periodically and go for a walk to stretch out your muscles.

- Plan for physical and mental demands. This may mean adding workers to your team to alleviate the demands of spring farm work, keeping a promise to yourself that you will take a well-deserved break after a set amount of time and not making critical decisions while you are weary.

Although the human factor is a significant cause of farm-related hazards your safety is about the choices you make. It just takes a moment to make a decision that could literally be the difference between life and death. 



During long hours on equipment, take the time to stop frequently, get off the machine, walk around and stretch.

Chemical safety is more than just reading the label

By Nicole Hornett, ARD Farm Safety Coordinator

For some people, the word ‘chemical’ makes them think of a misty science lab, thick safety goggles and bubbling beakers. For those that work with chemicals on a routine basis, like farmers, they know these substances better as fertilizers, disinfectants, sanitizers, fuels, solvents and more. Farmers know that products like insecticides, rodenticides and herbicides are toxic by design. If those products are deadly to another life form, what can they do to the human that handles them? When working with or near chemicals, it’s vital to: **Get the training. Know the hazard. Wear the gear.**

Get the Training: Part of knowing the hazard means getting the right training! When it comes to chemical safety, a Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) course is a great place to start. WHMIS training usually covers how to read labels and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), emergencies, storage and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The WHMIS course you took in high school was a good introduction to workplace labels but consider a refresher course if it’s been more

than three years or you’re on a new work site. With many online, on-site or classroom options, WHMIS training is accessible, quick and relatively inexpensive.

Know the Hazard: Not all hazards come with a warning label. Chemical hazards aren’t

just a concern when it comes time to open the jug—what about transportation, storage, spills, exposure and disposal? Task-specific training with the chemicals used on your farm can help you see the hazards from start to finish.

There’s always more to chemical safety than what’s written on the label. Can you leave pesticides unattended in the back of your truck? How should left-over anti-freeze be stored? What happens if some gasoline gets spilled? When do you read the MSDS? Can you store



Be sure to read the MSDS of any chemical so you know what PPE is required. Not all chemicals require the same amount of protection.

Virkon® solution inside a rinsed 20-litre Ivomec® jug? How do you wash clothing contaminated with chemicals?

Wear the Gear: You’re trained. You know the safety requirements. Now is not the time to forget the PPE because it’s hot, uncomfortable or unflattering. Even if you’re following all the precautions, like ensuring you’re in a well-ventilated area, PPE is an essential defence against spills, splashes, vapours and more.

If you find your PPE is truly uncomfortable, then you’ll need to talk to your supervisor about finding the gear that’s right for you. No one wants to wear the respirator mask that cuts into their nose or the face-shield that always slides off. With many great options to pick from, poor-fitting PPE is a terrible excuse for not wearing the gear you need. Remember that PPE only works if you use it!

For more information on chemical safety, visit the Alberta Farm Safety Program website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety.

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