



4-H, WorkSafeBC, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, and AgSafe team up with B.C. youth to make injuries from farm machinery a thing of the past.

Young farm workers learn safety from a respected source: their peers

By Gord Woodward

Farm machinery accounts for a significant percentage of injuries in B.C.'s agriculture sector. To address the risk, young farmworkers are turning to their peers through the channels of 4-H B.C., a branch of a global network of youth organizations dedicated to leadership and development.

In B.C., 4-H clubs are using two new videos to promote safe-work practices on and around tractors and other farm machinery. A joint project of 4-H, WorkSafeBC, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, and AgSafe, the videos are being shown at club meetings and events around the province. They're also available on YouTube.

"The videos send a powerful message to youth because they come from youth," says Abbotsford-based Mike Nielsen, a WorkSafeBC manager with Field Prevention Services. "They can pass good safety habits along to their peers."

Cole Hoefer, 17, a member of the 4-H beef club in Armstrong, is one of the youths helping to share the message about farm safety. In the videos, he demonstrates safe work habits when on and around equipment. His role was undoubtedly inspired by his own experience as a farmhand: two years ago, his foot was injured in a machinery incident.

"Young people need to be trained in safety," he says. "Employers really need to focus on that aspect."

In the last five years, more than 2,700 injuries were reported in B.C.'s agriculture sector. Farm vehicles or machinery were involved in 16 percent of them.

The videos are learning tools that aim to reduce those numbers by teaching young farm workers key safety points, including the following:

- Read and follow the user's manual for all farm equipment
- Ensure the tractor's roll-over protection structures (ROPS) are up, and always wear your seatbelt

- Always keep three points of contact when getting on and off equipment
- Wear high-visibility apparel when working around farm equipment
- Ensure all power take off (PTO) shields and guards are maintained and in place

4-H B.C. was a natural choice as a partner in the production and distribution of the videos, *4-H Working Safely on Tractors* and *4-H Working Safely Around Tractors*.

“Safety is one of the primary things we teach,” says 4-H B.C. safety chair Lorna Kotz. Their 2,200 members work on family or commercial farms, where they face hazards ranging from machinery, to unpredictable animal behaviours, to pesticides and hazardous substances.

Members are six to twenty-one years of age and generally eager to learn, she says. “If you teach kids the proper way to do things, they get it before they develop bad habits.”

As an added bonus, parents on family farms may listen to their children when it comes to safety, in both the fields and their homes. “When you teach the kids,” she says, “it rubs off on the adults.”

Nielsen sees that dynamic too. “Young people are very well informed,” he says. “They have become role models for older workers.”

Many of them will also become the next generation of ranchers, farmers, supervisors, and managers. And, if teenage farmhand Hoefer is an example, they’ll be well prepared for protecting themselves from work-related injury and illness.

“Safety becomes part of day-to-day life,” he says. “It’s a pretty big concern.”

Visit worksafebc.com to see the videos and access free resources on safety in specific agricultural agriculture sectors. 📺

Peer-to-peer tips on farm safety

What safety pointers does teenage farmhand Cole Hoefer emphasize to his peers?

- “Don’t ride on the steps of a tractor.”
- “Always be aware of hydraulics, because lines can blow at any time.”
- “No baggy clothing. It can get caught in the machinery.”
- “If you’re going to work on a piece of equipment, always shut it off and lock it out first.”

WHAT WE OFFER:

ONSITE HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING
 CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION (COR) PROGRAM
 REDUCED COST FOR ONLINE SDS MANAGEMENT
 DISABILITY GUIDELINES TO HELP WITH YOUR STAY AT WORK/RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM

SHARING THE
KNOWLEDGE

REGISTER TODAY!

2017 BC MUNICIPAL OCCUPATIONAL
 HEALTH & SAFETY CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 15 - 17, 2017 IN PENTICTON, BC
pacificsafetycenter.com/bcmsa

CONTACT US
 CATHY COOK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 P: 778-278-3486 F: 778-278-0029
 E: ccook@bcmsa.ca

British Columbia
Municipal Safety
 Association

bcmsa.ca  