

Farm safety – confined spaces

Any confined space on a farm poses a particular danger, because the threat may not be apparent until it's too late. Silos, vats, tanks, wells, manure pits and other enclosed or partly enclosed structures can suffocate a person with vapours, toxic gases, dust or low oxygen levels.

Rescuers coming to the aid of someone who has collapsed inside a confined space are usually exposed to the risk too. It is not unusual for numerous members of the same family to be killed in a single confined space accident.

The dangers of confined spaces

Harmful fumes or low oxygen atmospheres are common in many confined spaces on farms. There is also the risk of suffocation inside a silo if stored grain or fertiliser collapses. The safest approach with any confined space is to avoid going in there. In many instances, tasks such as cleaning can be achieved using other means, such as external pumps.

If it is necessary for someone to go inside the confined space, consider hiring a contractor who is trained and experienced. If you have no other option but to go inside the confined space yourself, be sure to take all the safety precautions you can. Talk to WorkSafe Victoria first for valuable and potentially life-saving advice.

Sewers and manure pits

Gases such as methane and hydrogen sulphide can build up inside manure pits and displace the oxygen. Safety suggestions include:

- Cover pits securely and post warning signs.
- Include natural or mechanical ventilation in the pit's design.
- Try to devise ways to clean the pit from the outside.
- Keep ignition sources well away from the pit, as methane and hydrogen sulphide are flammable.
- If you must go inside the pit, wear self-contained breathing apparatus or an airline respirator. Take all necessary precautions.

Silos

A person can be buried and asphyxiated by falling feed, grain or fertiliser inside a silo. Safety suggestions include:

- Use a drier feed so you don't have to unblock the auger discharge or find ways to mix the feed so that it won't crust.
- Use air blower system to replace auger for placing grain into silo.
- Clear blockages from the outside through a hatch.
- Fit vibration systems or turbulence valves.
- Prevent moisture getting in and caking the feed by fitting and maintaining seals.
- If you have to go inside, use a strong safety line or harness and switch off mechanical devices like the auger.
- NEVER work alone. Have other person outside and in constant communication (voice and lanyard).

Underground tunnels and wells

Children can be attracted to wells as interesting places to play. Safety suggestions include:

- Cover or fence entrances securely and post warning signs.
- Warn children of the dangers.
- Make wells and underground tunnels strictly out-of-bounds as play areas.

Water tanks

Keep out of the tank by finding other ways to empty, repair and clean it. Safety suggestions include:

- Put a lid on the tank so animals and debris can't fall in.
- Fit an external pump or an automated self-cleaning system.
- Install taps in above ground tanks.
- Try cleaning out the tank from the outside, using high pressure hoses.
- Don't use petrol-powered pumps inside the tank.
- Hire a professional when required.

Rescue attempts can be fatal

Our first impulse when seeing a loved one in danger is to help them. However, entering a confined space with dangerous fumes or low oxygen levels can overcome and kill the rescuers too. Never attempt a rescue unless you have a proper rescue plan and the right safety equipment, such as breathing apparatus. Otherwise, call on emergency services personnel, who are professionally trained and equipped.

Draw up an emergency plan

An emergency plan for the whole family is vital. Some suggestions include:

- Seek advice from WorkSafe Victoria on how to safely deal with the confined spaces on your farm.
- Ensure easy access to a suitable first aid kit.
- Make sure at least one person on the farm is trained in first aid.
- Keep emergency numbers and correct addresses next to the telephone.
- Plan routes to the nearest hospital.
- Regularly talk through or practice your emergency plan with your family and other workers.
- Make sure your children understand what to do in an emergency

This information and lots more can be found at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au or www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/swa/HealthSafety/HaazardsSafetyIssues/ConfinedSpaces or talk to Workplace Standards Tasmania for friendly and practical advice about working in confined spaces



Safety alert – veterinary vaccines

There have been reports of serious injuries resulting from accidental self injection of the Ovine Johne's Disease Vaccine "Gudair". Farmers have lost the use of limbs as a result of these "needle stick" injuries, and a Tasmanian farmer recently has been left with permanent impairment of his hand.

It seems that the mineral oil in the vaccine (also found in Footrot vaccines) is the irritant which causes the serious inflammation and dissolves the tendons in the process.

It is vital to use extreme caution when vaccinating with either of these vaccines –

- the sheep/lamb must be tightly constrained as in a lamb marking cradle,
- use a sheathed needle,
- wear a long sleeved protective glove which the needle cannot penetrate, and wear a leather apron,
- preferably have just one trained operator performing the procedure, and
- If accidental injection occurs – first wash with soap and water, (do not squeeze), and seek immediate medical advice.

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Newsletter of Proactive Agricultural Safety & Support Inc



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**REMEMBER
BEING SAFE IS
NO ACCIDENT**

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NOISE

Is noise a hazard? It is rare to enter a workplace today and not be assaulted by the din of metal crashing against metal, the roar of vehicle movements, the shrill blast of compressed air being released, or the rumbling of engines and compressors. It is all hazardous in that it may lead to deafness plus increases the risk of accidents and other health issues.

Effects on hearing:

Fatigue of hair cells in the cochlea leads to short-term hearing loss which may last a few minutes, hours or days after exposure to noise of high intensity. Resulting hearing loss is often permanent and irreversible.

Noise can also cause tinnitus, a disturbing ringing in the ear. This is most annoying at night and can cause sleeplessness. As deafness sets in the tinnitus echo becomes even more tormenting.

Very loud, impact noises from explosions cause a special form of damage termed acoustic trauma resulting in damage to the actual eardrum and ossicles.

Noise induced stress:

Noise acts on the body as stress, and sets in motion a series of bodily reactions. Stress caused by noise leads to irritability, fatigue and headaches which may increase blood pressure, strain the heart and affect vision.

Noise as a safety hazard:

When noise interferes with communication between workers it becomes a safety issue – workers cannot warn each other of danger, or hear when a dangerous situation may arise.

Noise as a source of annoyance:

A noisy workplace can cause annoyance sufficient to cause loss of concentration, and therefore increase the possibility of an accident.

Did you know it is common to lose hearing to higher pitched noises first i.e. for someone who is suffering hearing loss a woman's voice is harder to hear than a man's. So.....perhaps it's not selective hearing after all!

Control of noise:

There are several options for controlling noise and protecting the ear:

- Control at the source – the first priority and involves reducing noise output of machinery.
- Control of the noise path – second priority and means placing shields and baffles between the noise source and the operators.
- Enclosure of the operator – when the operator is enclosed by a soundproof booth.

PPE - Personal Protective Equipment:

This option is essential when all the above alternatives have been investigated and found to be unachievable. The disadvantages are the inability to hear "good" noises or noises that alert danger. Finally it has been found that some workers in noisy industries have even developed throat disorders and voice problems from having to shout to be heard.

For more information:
www.wst.tas.gov.au/safety_comply/additional_topics/safety/noise

PPE: Ear muffs

(Several grades) the more expensive usually better protection

Ear plugs:

individually fitted - best protection



Women on Farms Gathering 2010 25-27 June, Hobart.

Put it in your diary Visit www.twia.org.au for more details

If you are an employer with less than 200 employees and would like specialist advice on health and safety in the workplace, phone 1300 366 322 to arrange for the advisors or education officer to visit you and give advice in a non-threatening and confidential way. And it's free. WorkCover officers can help employers and workers with the management of workplace injuries and its various facets, such as medical treatment, rehabilitation and return to work.

Asbestos - The health risks



Significant health risks may result from the inhalation of airborne asbestos fibres

Asbestos was commonly used in building materials between the 1940's and late 1980's because of its durability, fire resistance properties and insulating properties. But since exposure to asbestos dust was found to cause disease, any importation and installation of products containing asbestos was banned. It is very difficult to identify asbestos by looking at it so if you are uncertain you should treat it as though it does contain asbestos.

Why is asbestos dangerous?

The inhalation of microscopic asbestos dust fibres may result in asbestosis (a progressive scarring of lung tissue) and two forms of cancer – lung cancer and mesothelioma. For some people, even a single exposure to asbestos can be dangerous to their health.

Where is it found?

Loosely bound asbestos was used in domestic heaters and stoves, and occasionally in insulation products. Firmly bound asbestos as used in asbestos-cement sheeting or "fibro" is found in many places around the home, including:

- Roofing and shingles
- Under eaves
- Exterior wall cladding
- Interior walls and wet areas
- Fencing
- Thermal boards around fireplaces and in switch boards
- Backing material on floor tiles and vinyl flooring
- Gaskets and seals in wood stoves
- Textures paint
- The brakes, clutches and gaskets of cars
- Garages and workshops
- Insulation used in hot water pipes, hot water cylinders, domestic heaters and stoves
- Pots for plants

What should I do if I find asbestos?

Internal cement sheet walls or ceilings that are in good condition and have been painted or sealed in an appropriate manner do not pose a health risk. External cement roofs and wall claddings containing asbestos do not need to be replaced unless they are broken or the surfaces have deteriorated, or can be sealed within a structure. If you are unsure or are concerned about asbestos in your farm buildings contact Workplace Standards Tasmania Helpline on 1300 366 322 or go to the the website www.wst.tas.gov.au and search for 'licensed asbestos removalists'.

Risk assessment:

- How fragile?
- In what condition is the asbestos object?
- How accessible is the object?
- What is the disturbance potential?

How do I safely remove asbestos?

Only remove asbestos if there is a risk.

Because of the hazardous nature of asbestos fibre, any activity that could result in the generation of dust should not be undertaken. As exposure to asbestos dust is a serious health risk during removal, packaging and disposal, it is important that it is handled safely during these operations. If you need to drill a hole in asbestos sheeting, 1st mark the spot, 2nd coat the spot with Vaseline or toothpaste, before drilling the hole or hammering the nail.

It is recommended that you contact a licensed asbestos removalist if you are considering removing any asbestos from your home. There are also rules governing the safe disposal of asbestos and you should contact your council regarding permits for this.

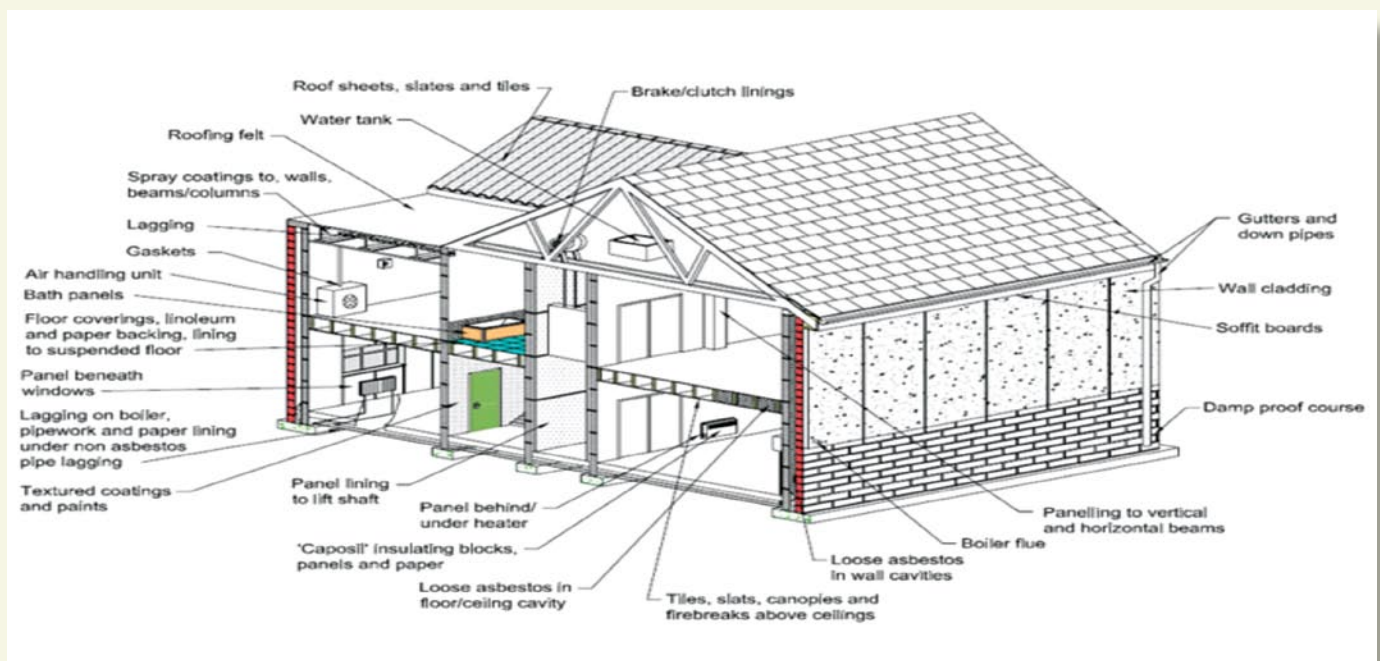
This information can be found at www.wst.tas.gov.au and www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/swa/HealthSafety/OHSstandards

Fix the Problem

Do whatever needed to ensure dust is not generated or is isolated from humans i.e. seal within a box, cover with another material.

Never screw, drive in nail, scrub, unless generated dust can be absorbed by another medium.

Always protect yourself with PPE (mask/respirator, gloves and hooded overalls) so dust is never inhaled or ingested.



A word from the Chairman by Anne Taylor

**Productivity is directly proportional to human performance.
Knowledge, skills and safety are important components.**

Can you imagine or remember the impact on a day's work output/achievements when a person has sustained a:

- Twisted ankle
- Aching back – from a pulled muscle/prolapsed disc/sciatica
- Broken bone
- Fatality
- Lacerations/crushing injuries.

These injuries also impact on:

- Our ability to participate and enjoy leisure activities
- Our comfort and possibly our long term well being
- Our close family members and friends.

Hence aiming to **ensure it is impossible for people on our farms to be injured or killed is vital.**

Gathering the knowledge on what to do, and then implementing can be very challenging tasks. The answer to the questions:

- "How do you eat an elephant?"
- "How do you implement a Safety Management System?"

is **"One bite at a time"**.

PASS Inc is committed to assist all primary producers, be they hobby farmers or running multi-million dollar businesses, to gain the information and skills to ensure we all have control of safety on our farms.

During autumn 2010 PASS Inc is involved in several activities to provide opportunities for all farmers to learn and view what others have achieved.

1. Forum **"Safety Management Systems"** 25th March 2010, at "Woodrising Farm" Cressy.

Participants had the opportunity to see the Safety Management Systems implemented documentation and the practical applications plus have a guided tour of Aurora Produce's Lamb Feedlot.

"Woodrising Farm" was the winner of Workcover Tasmania's 2009 Safety Award "Best Workplace Health and Safety Practice/s in a Small Business".

2. Dairy Business of the Year Award:

PASS Inc was delighted to accompany the judges who visited the 7 finalists to assess their safety management with the view of awarding a "Safety Award".

3. Attend Field Days for Dairy Business of the Year Award:

May 2010 – PASS Inc will deliver a presentation and provide feedback on the finalist's safety management.

4. Safety Awards for Exhibitors at Agfest 2010:

- a. Exhibitor with best safety display (excluding government departments).
- b. Best safety innovation (tool/product).

5. Man displays at:

- a. Fruit Growers Tasmanian annual conference on 22nd May 2010.
- b. TFGA tent at Agfest at Site 506 in Fifth Avenue.

6. Planning several events during winter details yet to be finalised:

- a) Professional Development for teachers of Agricultural Studies and managers of School Farms.
- b) Safe Futures: an expo of rural careers with a safety focus.
- c) a Forum during National Farm Safety Week, 18th – 24th July 2010.

One bite at a time, is about having a desire to learn, focusing on one area at a time and making changes to ensure safety has improved.

First identify what is the most dangerous area of your farm. Then identify what is the most dangerous task you perform. Does this task have the potential to kill you or cause severe injury?

Do you know what an MSDS is?

There is a Material Safety Data Sheet for every substance that is used or stored on the farm, from Talon to salt to glyphosate (the active ingredient of Round Up). By law all workplaces should have a readily accessible copy of all MSDS's of all substances they use or store in their workplace.

Some MSDS's can be downloaded from <http://www.cropping.elders.com.au/echemseek> or from the manufacturer's website e.g. Nufarm, Pfizer.

Why have an MSDS?

It provides information on the active ingredient, and the antidote, the first-aid required when a problem arises and the appropriate PPE to be worn when handling the substance/chemical.

I just need your help for a moment

Have you heard those words before?

"Quick I need you to come now"

The scene: Husband doing a little renovation / repair task, calls to his wife to assist by holding and steadying a long floppy metal object whilst he cuts it with the angle grinder, in order to slice off a long taper.

The object is teetering on a pile of gravel, at its balance point, with the object at about the height of the husband's pelvis. The wooden horses are across on the other side of the yard.

The ground is littered with objects, including lengths and coils of various extension cords, bits of timber off cuts and so on. The extension cords are knotted together at their joining plugs.

Husband bedecked with earmuffs and goggles, poised about to cut suddenly says, "Could be a bit noisy, you had better wear that hard hat" (with earmuffs and mesh face shield). "Stay close behind me while I move forward. I need the object to be kept steady and not to twist".

The grinder whirls, the sparks fly, and fly and fly. Land on hair, sting the skin, and penetrate the mesh face shield. Fortunately both are wearing woollen jumpers.

"Hang on a minute" retorts the wife. "You did not tell me about the sparks. I am getting burnt. My hair smells. The sparks could go into my eyes".

"Don't worry about it. Just turn your head and shut your eyes, and stay close to me as I move forward".

Let us evaluate this situation. What are the dangers?

- To the man? • To his wife?

What could be done to remove/reduce the dangers?

Husband	Wife
Sparks landing on skin, hair, clothing	Sparks landing on skin, hair, clothing, eyes
Bumped by wife (could lead to) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cut by grinder• Cut through electric cord	Stumble on debris / gravel pile Twist ankle if stumbles on debris
Temper flares = argue	Temper flares = argue
No dinner	Temporary deafness
Injured back from leaning forward and twisted with heavy object in hand	Injured back

Best Practice:

Before commencing the activity:

- Survey the scene.
- Identify the hazards (littered debris, object supported by gravel pile, electric cords lying haphazardly, noise, flying sparks).
- Discuss the task = what is to be achieved, how to do it, roles of each person, PPE required and used properly.
- Remove dangers (remove littered debris, place cords away from path of operators, place object on stable wooden horses).

Managing safety is not expensive. Not managing safety can be costly.

REMEMBER A SAFE BUSINESS IS A GOOD BUSINESS