

Health & Safety Update | April 2017

Welcome to Strutt & Parker's Farm Research Group Health & Safety Update

The quarterly Health & Safety Update is to assist you in ensuring that you are thinking about topical health and safety matters on your farm and/or estate. Health and safety is a vital part of any business operation.

Spring field work is well underway and animals in many areas are back out in the fields. With livestock out of the buildings, now may be the best opportunity you have to carry out some safety inspections and ensure that you leave yourself plenty of time to get the work completed prior to the buildings being restocked in the autumn. Telehandlers are widely used for a range of tasks including filling silage clamps, moving fertiliser bags and mucking out so making sure they are safe to use is imperative.

For further assistance or information on the issues discussed below, please call your nearest Strutt & Parker office.

Asbestos

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR) came into effect from 6 April 2012 and updated all earlier regulations. The regulations require that businesses commit themselves to identifying and managing asbestos and asbestos containing materials in the workplace, and communicating this to employees as required. This requires businesses to:

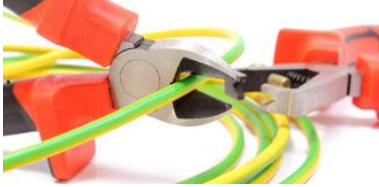


- Hold an up-to-date record of the condition and location of all asbestos containing material and presumed asbestos containing material
- Assess the likelihood of anyone being exposed to the asbestos containing material on their premises
- Prepare a plan setting out the risk from the asbestos containing materials to be managed
- Put the above plan into action
- Review, monitor and regularly review the plan
- Ensure that all employees are fully aware of asbestos and the risks associated with exposure to it
- Provide adequate training to employees to enable them to prevent and minimise their exposure to asbestos dust and thereby protect their health
- Assess the potential and type of exposure to asbestos that employees may come into contact with prior to any work
- Provide suitable information, instruction and training in asbestos awareness for any employee who is likely to be involved in work that may disturb asbestos. This must take account of any work whether it is non-licensed, notifiable non-licensed (NNLW) or licensed work and must be job specific
- Take appropriate steps to prevent and/or reduce exposure to below the set limit as far as reasonably practicable and to advise employees of how this will be achieved
- Always use a licensed contractor to work with and dispose of asbestos containing materials and suspected asbestos containing materials
- Ensure that any repair work carried out, either by employees or contractors, is done so by those that have received specialist training as required by CAR
- All hazardous waste must be handled, stored and disposed of in line with current legislation

Materials containing asbestos present a hazard only when asbestos fibres are released and dispersed so that they can be inhaled. Mechanical operations such as the sawing, drilling or abrading of asbestos products will create dust - more dust is created by mechanical power than by the use of hand tools. Asbestos can produce very small fibrous dust particles which can sometimes cause fatal diseases.

Electrical Hardwire Testing

'Electrical equipment', as defined in the Electricity at Work Regulations, includes every type of electrical equipment from, for example, a high-voltage transmission overhead line, to a battery-powered hand lamp. Farm and estate environments can be harsh on equipment and electrical equipment is no different, as such they require regular inspection to ensure that there is little chance of deterioration leading to danger. Any part of an installation that has become obviously defective between tests should be de-energised until the fault can be fixed. You should always have your electrical installation inspected and tested by a person who has the competence to do so.



Where electrical installations are no longer used or abandoned for any reason they should be decommissioned by disconnecting them from all sources of supply and isolated to prevent equipment inadvertently being started or a shock being received from defective equipment. Every business should do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble.

Whilst not a statutory requirement it is good practice to have all hardwire electrical systems tested on a five year cycle, if work is undertaken to the electrical system or a defect is found it may be necessary to have the inspection carried out sooner. Inspections must always be carried out by a competent person.

Telehandlers

Telehandlers are one of the most versatile and well-used pieces of machinery on farms and estates. Their versatility means that they are sometimes utilised for jobs that are outside of their scope, putting both the operator and others in danger. As a result, there have been a number of serious accidents, including some fatalities. Improving safety when using these machines is vital. The 'SAFE STOP' procedure should be followed when using any machine, but is particularly important with telehandlers, as they are frequently used in the farmyard where others may be working or where visitors have access, and are unfamiliar with the usual activities in the farmyard. The 'SAFE STOP' procedure requires operators to put the handbrake on, ensure controls are in neutral, turn the engine off and remove the key from the ignition.

Ensuring that all operators of telehandlers are appropriately trained prior to using telehandlers is paramount. Training courses are regularly run by local training groups.

The safe use, maintenance and selection of appropriate equipment is essential to the safe operation of these machines. Planning tasks for telehandlers and ensuring that the operator is competent for such a task, making certain that the attachments are suitable both for the task and compatible with the telehandler, is a necessity. Ultimate responsibility for the planning of tasks and therefore safe operation of the machine rests with the employer. Under no circumstances should a telehandler be used to lift persons unless they are in a LOLER tested man cage.

Three Point Linkages

Three point linkages are an important part of many tractor operations, but their safe use is frequently overlooked in an effort to get an implement hitched up and the job done. Implements which are attached via three point linkages are often unstable so can be dangerous in their own right when hitching up. Operators should always consider the following when using three point linkages:

- Whether the tractor is able to safely and physically lift the implement
- Whether the tractor needs counter balancing with front weights
- Whether it is safe to stand where you are standing
- Whether help is necessary to safely hitch/unhitch
- Communicate clearly with the other operator if you are getting help
- Never stand between the tractor and the implement or behind them unless the tractor is stationary and the driver is aware of your presence
- Operate controls from the correct position
- Never forget others around you are also at risk
- Make sure you use the right hitch system
- Never stand on the implement you are hitching/unhitching or with your feet under the implement
- Ensure that jacks, skids and other supports are used and maintained correctly
- Ensure that all stops are correctly adjusted to prevent the machine from moving in transport
- Ensure pipes and cables are stowed so as to avoid being caught or pinched during the movement of the implement



Silage Clamps

Silage clamps can be dangerous places. Silage clamps usually have an effluent tank connected to them to take away any silage liquor that is produced; the liquor in itself can be dangerous as it has a high acid content. The walls of silage clamps are high and frequently made of precast concrete panels. Ensuring that the panels are in good order prior to filling the clamp is essential; if a panel is damaged it should be replaced. Before filling a silage clamp, the following should be carried out:

- Check all joints to ensure they are correctly sealed
- Check all concrete surfaces for signs of corrosion or mechanical damage
- Ensure all repairs are fully cured before filling
- Check all walls, floor slabs and outside effluent channels for cracks. If any are noticed, contact an engineer for investigation before filling
- Ensure that any safety fences and warning notices are in position and in good order
- Check effluent tanks are empty and pipes connecting tanks to the clamp are free from obstructions
- Check all effluent systems by flushing with clean water and looking for leaks or blockages
- Ensure filling tractor or loader does not exceed the maximum vehicle weight (when fully loaded) allowed in the silo design
- Ensure that the operator is fully aware of all safety aspects of filling the clamp and does not exceed loadings shown on the safety notice



When filling a silage clamp, the following should be carried out:

- Ensure that incoming material is no more than 80% moisture content. If this figure is exceeded, filling should be halted until grass has dried to below this figure
- Check that the effluent system is operating correctly and that tanks are emptied regularly and are not allowed to overflow
- Ensure that filling and compacting vehicles do not drive closer than 300mm (1 foot) from clamp walls
- Compacted silage should not be higher than the top of the walls unless the base of this extra material is a minimum of 3 metres from any wall and the walls have been designed to take surcharged loads
- Inspect the exterior of the clamp for any effluent leaks or cracks to walls or surrounding concrete. Any cracks or movement of walls should be reported to an engineer immediately and filling should be halted
- Once full, check all fixing bolts on horizontal panels for tightness

If a clamp is being repaired, or a new one is being built, ensure that you order the correct specification of panels, and discuss your true intentions with a competent engineer and supplier to ensure that your structure is able to support the weight of the silage and any machines working within the clamp.

Vehicle Loads and Weights

Modern agricultural machinery is large and relatively quick on the roads but don't forget that just because a machine can physically do something it does not always mean it can, particularly when on public roads. It is also essential to ensure that employees who are operating different vehicles and equipment are licensed to do so where necessary; failure to ensure that the appropriate licence is held may lead to a conviction of £2,500 and 3-6 penalty points. A farm truck towing a trailer with a weight in excess of 750kg requires a category B+E certification on the operator's Driving Licence; a tracked machine requires the operator to be over 21 years of age and hold a category H on their licence.

The maximum gross weight limit for a tractor and trailer combination was raised in 2015 to 31,000kg, although the maximum trailer weight limit remained at 18,290kg. The maximum penalty for operating a tractor and trailer over this weight is £5,000. Therefore, when road work is required, the entire train weight should be considered before travelling on public roads, this is particularly the case when hauling heavy loads, and where high horsepower tractors with cultivation equipment are being moved.

Always ensure tractors and implements are well lit, and that any required marker boards are in place when on the public road. Large and/or slow machines may require escorting when being moved between locations. When such vehicles do have to be moved, consider where possible the time of day and avoid peak traffic.

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