

# Health & Safety Update | January 2019

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.

A new year and an opportunity to make your new year's resolution to review health and safety in your workplace and to make your farm or estate a safer place to work. Take the winter months as an opportunity to talk to your team and find out if they have any health and safety concerns and to enrol them onto appropriate training or refresher courses to ensure you are compliant with your legal obligations.

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

## ABRASIVE WHEELS

The use of cutting and grinding discs is commonplace on farms and estates. They have the potential to be a very dangerous piece of equipment, as such abrasive wheels are considered to carry such risk that they warrant their own training course, and yet frequently farm and estate workers are not trained to use them.

Inappropriate selection of a cutting or grinding disc for a given task presents a serious hazard to the operator and others as the risk of disc shatter is greatly increased. Discs are designed specifically for cutting or grinding, not both, and where cutting discs are used they should be selected for either stone or metal as required. Cutting discs should never be used for grinding or vice versa, no matter how small the task.



Machines and discs should be checked for defects and damage prior to every use, failure to do so presents a hazard to both operator and others. Where abrasive wheels are being used, ensure that all guards are in place and functioning correctly. Be aware of the direction that debris is being ejected and others working in close proximity. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be worn which should include gloves, eye protection and ear protection, if others are working in very close proximity they should also be wearing appropriate PPE. Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) may be caused by the vibration from the operation of grinding and cutting machines over prolonged periods so regular breaks from the machine should be taken.

## BATTERY CHARGING

Batteries are potentially lethal equipment, they are used for a variety of purposes including on vehicles, electric fences and gas guns. They can be dangerous and/or explode if handled incorrectly, injuries from batteries can include electric shock, burns and wounds from flying debris. When handling and charging batteries the following should always be considered;

- Batteries being charged are kept away from potential sources of ignition including fuels, oils and localised hot surfaces;
- Never smoke around charging batteries or when handling batteries;
- Gloves and eye protection should be worn whenever handling batteries;
- Assembly Rings or other metallic objects should be removed prior to handling batteries to prevent any accidental short circuits;
- Tools with insulated handles are used when working with batteries;
- Battery levels are topped up if required prior to charging;
- Only ever charge batteries in well-ventilated areas;
- Batteries are vented whilst charging;
- Connections are checked prior to switching the charger on;
- Always ensure you wash your hands after handling batteries.

Batteries are usually full of a solution which is either sulphuric acid or potassium hydroxide, both of which are highly corrosive. Sulphuric acid and potassium hydroxide can both cause permanent damage to the eyes, cause serious burns to the skin and are poisonous if swallowed. Lead, nickel, lithium or cadmium compounds found in batteries are harmful to humans, animals and the environment so must be disposed of appropriately.

## PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES

As the mains water supply network is patchy in many rural areas, maintaining a private water supply from a spring or borehole often comes as part and parcel of owning a rural estate or farm. This is becoming increasingly onerous as water usage, regulation, and the expectations of users increases.



Under the provisions of The Private Water Supply Regulations 2016 (as amended) and The Drinking Water Regulations 2017, water supplied for human consumption must be wholesome (i.e. of sufficient quality), free of bacteriological contamination and within defined parameters for chemical constituents.

Under the 2016 Regulations, if you control a private supply and it serves your own household only, the local authority has no duty to apply its Risk Assessment Regime unless requested. If however you take bed and breakfast guests or run a pub or café or any other establishment whereby visitors are supplied with water, or the supply serves anyone else, the Risk Assessment process applies.

If an Estate's private supply serves any dwelling houses, we recommend that, if the local authority has not yet carried out a test, this is done by the Estate itself at the earliest opportunity. In addition, prior to any dwelling being let to a new tenant, the water at that dwelling should be tested. Each private supply should also be tested at least once every year, even when there is no change of occupiers. Where a supply serves a number of dwellings then, assuming that the first water test is satisfactory, it should be sufficient to rotate the annual test around the various dwellings served, rather than testing at each dwelling each year.

In terms of the Risk Assessment process, within 5 years of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010, the local authority is bound to have undertaken a risk assessment of every private system in England as to the possibilities of contamination, together with annual testing, if they deem it necessary. They are bound to repeat this no less frequently than every 5 years. They have the right to recover the reasonable costs of this from the relevant person. If a test (taken as closely as possible to the entry of water into the house, so usually at the kitchen cold tap) shows a failure, the local authority must serve a notice on the responsible person to take steps to rectify it, and a notice on the occupants not to drink the water. In the case of bacteriological contamination, there is no tolerance. The responsible person will have to take active steps to resolve the problem, whether by ensuring effective treatment of the water, or an alternative supply. This is likely to be zealously enforced by the local authority. It is an offence to breach or fail to comply with a Notice, the sanction being fines and/or prison sentences of up to 2 years! The local authority now has the power to enter to do the work and recover the costs from the relevant person.

In the case of chemical constituents, the legislation provides limited scope for a temporary authorisation of up to three years, if it can be shown that there is no practical alternative or means of treatment. Practical experience however, is that such authorisations are unlikely to be granted.

## MACHINERY GUARDS

The range of equipment, machines and tools used on farms and estates is vast; from simple hand operated tools to large sophisticated mechanised equipment such as forage harvesters which have numerous moving parts and potential hazards. Machinery hazards can be both mechanical and non-mechanical. Mechanical hazards are classified as entanglement, traps, impact, contact and ejection; while non-mechanical hazards include dust and fumes, fire and explosion, splinters, electricity, noise and temperature.

The types of guard that may be used to protect workers include:

- Fixed guards – a physical barrier not connected to the machine's controls, which has no moving parts and requires a spanner or screwdriver to remove it;
- Interlocking guards – linked to the machine's controls, the guard prevents access to dangerous parts during operation but allows access at other times;
- Adjustable guards – manually or self-adjusting guards accommodate a range of different sized materials but remain fixed during the operation of the machine;
- Trip devices – whilst they do not prevent access to the danger zone, they should stop the machine prior to contact being made, e.g. safety trip wires on grain stirrers.

Ensuring all equipment is correctly serviced and maintained is essential to minimising the risk of danger, both to those using the machine as well as those who may be affected by its operation. Where guards are an integral part of the machine they must always be in a serviceable condition and in place prior to the machine being operated. Where guards are in place, under no circumstances must machinery be operated if the guard is damaged or missing.

It is the responsibility of the employer to provide safe equipment to use and to ensure that the means to service it properly are made available. Those that use the machine are required to use it in the manner it was intended and directed, and to report any damage or defects to the Manager/Foreman/Safety Officer.

## NEAR MISS RECORDING

A 'near miss' is an incident that could have resulted in an injury or illness to people, danger to health, and/or damage to property or the environment. These occurrences happen frequently but are too often dismissed as part of the job or 'one of those things' however, useful lessons can be learnt to stop them from happening again if they are recorded, discussed and measures implemented on the back of the review. It can be difficult to get staff to report near-misses or minor incidents, as they are often seen as funny or embarrassing occurrences (until someone is hurt). It is important to create a culture which encourages reporting of these accidents.

Reporting 'near-miss' incidents is an important part of identifying problems and putting measures in place to protect workers in the future. Highlighting less obvious hazards in a workplace, or identifying areas where a problem is developing is an important part of health and safety within the workplace. Recording and investigating near misses, helps assess the strength of your safety management system and provides the opportunity to fix problems before injuries occur.

## WELDING

Welding is regularly carried out on farms and estates. It is essential for repair, maintenance and fabrication of equipment but can be a hazardous task if not carried out properly. Welding should always be carried out in a well-ventilated area, as fumes pose a significant hazard particularly where workers are required to be directly over the welding area to see the work being carried out.

Arc eye is a serious hazard to the welder so a welding mask must always be worn. It takes only a moment of exposure to a welding arc's rays for unprotected eyes to experience 'arc flash', a painful condition that may not appear until hours after the exposure. Welding helmets should be fitted with a proper filter shade to protect the operator's face and eyes when welding or watching, other people working in the vicinity can also be affected by arc eye so should avoid looking into the working area. A designated welding area should be established where possible, and a curtain should be erected to protect other people working nearby.

Workers should be provided with sufficient instruction and training to complete welding tasks as well as appropriate protective equipment, to include a mask, overalls and gloves which must be in good condition. When welding it is important to;

- Ensure the working area is clear of other items and particularly flammable materials;
- Select the appropriate welder for the material to be welded;
- Materials should be cleaned to allow a good contact to be made;
- Material must be held in place securely;
- Use a welding screen to protect others not involved in the welding process from the risk of arc eye;
- Select appropriate amps for the welder to make sufficient contact and for the weld to take to the material.

Select the appropriate welding rod or adjust reel speed for the feed of wire to be sufficient for both the size of weld and the speed at which the worker is welding.

## PREVENTING FALLS

Falling from height is the second biggest cause of fatal accidents and the fourth biggest cause of non-fatal accidents in agriculture. Falls often happen from roofs, lofts, ladders, vehicles, bale stacks, and unsuitable access equipment, such as buckets. Precautions should be taken to ensure that;

- Equipment is appropriate and not defective for the task;
- The equipment has been correctly maintained;
- The task has been properly planned;
- A risk assessment has been carried out;
- The work area is clearly marked or cordoned off where necessary.

The law states you should follow these rules, and in this order:

- Avoid work at height where you can; and if not
- Use work equipment or measures to prevent falls; and if not
- Use work equipment that minimises the distance and consequences of a fall.

The use of a safe, stable working platform, a scissor lift, a man cage or a scaffold tower should be used in preference to a ladder. Ladders should only be used when there is no safer alternative and only for short periods of time (minutes not hours).



# GET IN TOUCH

## Offices

Head Office (London City)	020 7338 4000
Ascot	01344 876 363
Banbury	01295 273 592
Banchory	01330 824 888
Cambridge	01223 459 500
Canterbury	01227 451 123
Chelmsford	01245 258 201
Chester	01244 354 888
Chichester	01273 832 602
Cirencester	01285 659 661
Edinburgh	0131 226 2500
Exeter	01392 215 631
Farnham	01252 821 102
Gerrards Cross	01753 891 188
Guildford	01483 306 565
Haddenham	01844 291384
Harpenden	01582 764 343
Harrogate	01423 561 274
Haslemere	01428 661 077
Horsham	01403 246 790
Inverness	01463 719 171
Ipswich	01473 214 841
Lewes	01273 475 411
Ludlow	01584 873 711
Market Harborough	01858 433 123
Mayfair	020 7629 7282
Moreton-in-Marsh	01608 650 502
Morpeth	01670 516 123
Newbury	01635 521 707
Northallerton	01609 780 306
Norwich	01603 617 431
Odiham	01256 702 892
Oxford	01865 366 700
Pangbourne	0118 984 575
Perth	01738 567 892
Salisbury	01722 328 741
Sevenoaks	01732 459 900
Shrewsbury	01743 284 204
St Albans	01727 738 280
Stamford	01780 484 040
Sunningdale	01344 623411
Winchester	01962 869999
Windlesham	01276 489500
Windsor	01753 257217

## People

### Land Management

James Farrell BSc(Hons) MRICS FAAV  
01423 706770  
james.farrell@struttandparker.com

### Farming

Will Gemmill BSc FAAV MBPR (Agric)  
01223 459471  
will.gemmill@struttandparker.com

### Development & Planning

Simon Kibblewhite BSc(Hons) BA FRICS MCI Arb  
020 7318 5177  
simon.kibblewhite@struttandparker.com

### Accounting & Taxation Services

Alex Heffer, BA(Hons) ACCA  
01245 254656  
alex.heffer@struttandparker.com

### Building Surveying

Tony Saffery MRICS  
01483 303098  
tony.saffery@struttandparker.com

### National Estate Agency

Guy Robinson  
020 7318 5175  
guy.robinson@struttandparker.com

### Estate & Farm Agency

Mark McAndrew MRICS  
020 7318 5171  
mark.mcandrew@struttandparker.com

### Health & Safety

Robert Gazely, BA (Hons) MSc  
01245 254611  
robert.gazely@struttandparker.com

### Energy

Alexander Creed BSc(Hons) MRICS FAAV  
020 7318 5022  
alexander.creed@struttandparker.com

### Research

Jason Beedell MRICS PhD BSc(Hons)  
020 7318 4757  
jason.beedell@struttandparker.com

### Forestry

Jon Lambert  
0131 222 9643  
jl@johnclegg.co.uk