

Lomond Farms brand includes safety

*by Theresa Whalen-Ruiter
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One hundred and five acres on three locations, 12 fruit and vegetable crops staffed or worked by six to 25 seasonal employees and two minor injuries in 20 years of business. That's a farm safety success story!

Paul and Shirley Lomond of Steadybrook, Nfld., operate under the Lomond Farms brand growing strawberries, raspberries, sea buckthorn, plums, high bush blueberries, cranberries, carrots, cabbage, pumpkins, sweet corn, broccoli and tomatoes. Their produce is sold as pick-your-own, at two on-farm markets and in local supermarkets.

“Safety is an important part of everything we do here,” says Paul Lomond. “I tell my workers that they came here with two good eyes, two good hands and two good feet – and that's the way I want them to go home.”

Lomond is sharing his philosophy on farm safety as part of the launch of Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, March 11 to 17, with the theme “*Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) only works if you use it!*” The campaign is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association in partnership with Farm Credit Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

On average, at least 1,500 people are hospitalized and 113 are killed in farm-related incidents in Canada each year, according to the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program. In 2006, Statistics Canada notes that almost 14 thousand Canadian farms reported one or more medically treated or lost time injuries. The Census of Agriculture 2001 shows the most frequent causes of farm-related injuries include unsafe use of equipment or material-handling practices, followed by fatigue, trying to save time and miscommunication between workers.

“Maintaining safety can be difficult in farming because workers come and go, and the work is so varied that they have to be competent in many skills,” Lomond explains. “A lot of it is common sense, however I try to lead by example and make it known to my workers that part of their job is to work safely.”

He makes it a practice to review with his workers how a machine operates and the hazards to watch out for before they get back into their seasonal routines. “The powers and operation of the machine are one thing, and the other important thing is to be aware of who and what else is around,” says Lomond.

All field labourers and equipment operators have First Aid and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training and there is a first aid kit at every location. Pickers are required to wear a hat and have sunscreen and water in their possession. Pickers also use ergonomically designed baskets that are strapped-on over the shoulders to give an even

weight distribution. Berries are picked into 12 or eight-quart trays so that workers can more easily lift them.

Occupational health and safety experts agree that when a workplace hazard is identified there are several ways to correct it such as: redesigning the set-up; using less dangerous materials; changing the work process or practices; changing the equipment; and establishing administrative controls or safety rules for workers. When all else fails to eliminate the hazard then personal protective equipment is used to reduce the hazard to acceptable levels.

“Most people think of personal protective equipment as being work boots, goggles and hardhats. In fact, it can be anything that makes doing a job safer,” says Lomond. “And I think the most important personal protective equipment is a person’s attitude. For both the worker and the business – good safety makes good sense.”

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*** A **photo** is available to accompany this article at www.casa-acsa.ca .

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