

Canadian  
Agricultural  
Safety Week  
Mar. 8-14, 2006

# FACT SHEET #1

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## Farm Safety is About Human Resource Management

How a farm manager views human resources directly affects human resource management.

Human resources have a dual role in risk management. People can be a source of risk when they do things carelessly; and they are also the most important part of the strategy for dealing with risk.

*"Farm safety is MY business."* is the theme of this year's Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW) campaign, March 8-14, 2006. The campaign emphasizes the personal and professional responsibilities of farm managers for their own safety as well as their workers. The risk management theme gives a special focus on youth aged 15 to 29 who make up a significant portion of new farm workers. CASW is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

The dynamics of risk management on Canadian farms is changing. In days gone by, the farmer and his family did most of the farm labour. In more recent years, as farms have gotten larger, more inexperienced farm labour is being hired creating a greater need for more formalized and structured strategies on farm safety training and expectations. For example, a young worker who was raised on a farm will know more about farm safety than a non-farming youth who is looking for a summer job on a farm. The non-farming youth will need specific safety training.

"Agriculture in Canada today is an advanced, highly complex and technological industry, just like any other. That means farmers must approach employee orientation and training just like they do in any other industry," said Bob Friesen, CFA President. "You wouldn't put an inexperienced young person on an auto assembly line without safety training. Why would you do it on a farm or ranch?"

The bottom line is that management, not labour, shapes the workplace attitude towards safety. Therefore it is management that must be responsible, accountable, and ultimately liable for the safety of workers.

"One of the most powerful farm safety tools is leading by example," says Friesen. "If you always use safe practices in your work, it shows your workers that this is how you expect them to do the job too and that shortcuts on safety are not acceptable."

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Another important factor in workplace safety is the worker's attitude towards safety. 'I didn't think it could happen to me' is a tragic understatement of responsibility. Again, management can set the standard of expectations with regard to safety by including it in: the job description, hiring process, orientation and training for the job, regular performance appraisal, compensation, and in disciplinary actions as necessary.

Keeping safety top of mind in the workplace is an on-going process. An excellent practice is to discuss various farm hazards and what can be done to prevent them, or alternatively what can be done to correct them – and then do it.

And finally, if a farm-related incident does occur, make sure all workers and family members know how to contact emergency services with detailed directions to the farm, are trained first aid, and have a first aid kit, fire extinguisher and personal protective equipment handy. When an incident occurs, every minute counts.

The CFA along with FCC, CASA, and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers that "*Farm safety is MY business*" means that you are responsible for your safety and that of your workers.

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### **For more information call:**

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