

Canadian  
Agricultural  
Safety Week  
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# FACT SHEET #4

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## Overcoming constraints to farm safety

Agriculture has long been one of the most dangerous industries in Canada. On average, 115 people are killed and another 1,500 are seriously injured by farm-related incidents in Canada each year - and many more minor injuries are never even reported. Further, the social cost of agricultural injuries has been estimated at \$200-300 million annually by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP).

“*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 owners and managers for their own safety as well as for their workers. CASW delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

“Most of us know how to do things safely, but sometimes we choose not to,” John Ryan, Farm Credit Canada (FCC) President and CEO, says. “It is easy to think ‘It wont happen to me’. Owner-operators need to do everything in their power to reduce the risk of farm accidents. Owning a farm operation means taking responsibility for farm safety.”

Broadly speaking, two out of three farm fatalities (60%) tend to be the owner-operator. The remaining farm fatalities tend to be: a child of the owner-operator (15%); a hired worker (12%); a relative – perhaps a brother or parent (8%); or the owner-operator’s spouse (3%), with the remaining (2%) being other visitors, reveals CAISP studies.

In an effort to create more effective farm safety initiatives, FarmSafe Australia recently examined the constraints and reasons why farmers tend not to adhere to farm safety practices. The study revealed the following broad themes:

- farmers’ values and attitudes;
- economic and cost-related issues;
- shortcomings in education and training;
- age and poor design of farm machinery and safety equipment;
- characteristics of the work force, work practices and farm environment;
- deficiencies in the performance of government departments and other responsible authorities;
- inconsistent support from farmer organizations and rural industry groups; and,
- competing priorities.

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The next step was to identify potential initiatives and policies to overcome these constraints when developing farm safety training and materials, which included:

- targeting of the less depressed segments of the farming industry;
- coupling high profile awareness and anxiety raising campaigns with the provision of accessible and workable solutions and with reduced or absent financial barriers;
- support for safety training and incentives for low cost do-it-yourself farm safety-related projects as part of ‘rural relief’ packages;
- incentives such as insurance ‘no-claim’ or other bonuses, and government incentives to encourage safety innovations on farms;
- marketing of farm safety in a way that links it to the higher ranked priorities of farmers, such as improved productivity and maintenance of the farm family lifestyle;
- inclusion of safety as a focus in all industries and sectors which serve agriculture; and,
- improving the design of personal protective equipment and increasing its accessibility.

The study showed that the more successful injury prevention programs generally implemented a mixture of education, environmental, design, legislative and enforcement strategies. An important challenge in farm safety is to design the right mix of strategies and countermeasures that produce the safest farm work environment, systems and behaviours which are compatible with the other needs of farmers such as high productivity.

It is equally important to know your audience, how to reach them, their perspective, and economic climate. This is significant considering that in Canada, 61 per cent of farms are owned and operated by one person, 27 per cent are partnerships, 10 per cent are family corporations, and only 2 per cent of farms are non-family corporations, as indicated by Statistics Canada.

“At FCC we are committed to farm safety and believe a solid understanding of safety constraints leads to effective solutions and long-term success,” Ryan says.

The CFA along with the 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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