

AG Safe COLUMN

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With spring well upon us, calves hitting the ground and range plans getting finalized in preparation for turn out, there are a few key things to remember regarding you, your ranch and your employees well being and safety. These are areas that constantly need attention and some of which we have gotten better at dealing with, others, not so much.

Employers in the Province of British Columbia are required to have a health and safety program. If you have 19 or fewer employees, you can work from a “less formal” program. Twenty or more requires a “formal” program. The safety program that you require can be built with you, for your operation, with the help of your FARSHA/AgSafe representative. This program will be, by design, intended to capture the things that you are doing well right now and to help you in areas that need some assistance. The goal is always to make the safety program part of the way you do business, not an add on to the many things that need to be done. The years of experience and expertise that the FARSHA/AgSafe team members bring when they arrive to help you in these matters makes the task much more understandable and less daunting. There is a true understanding of what you need to do to comply with applicable legislation and regulations, while understanding what approach can and will work effectively and efficiently in your unique operation. As much as there are similar practises and tasks each site is unique. We get that, and we will work with you to develop and implement an effective and viable program for you.

Safety programs are key and they are the tool that helps to ensure that what you want to relay to a worker, family member, or remind yourself of, is the best way to do something. WorkSafeBC officers do inspect and are increasingly committed to doing so. When they come to your site, the officer is asking three basic questions:

1. What’s the problem?
2. What have you done about it?
3. How can you prove it?

Most of you are pretty good at A & B, it is C that often poses the issue and it is C that you will need to establish to address the area of due diligence if ever you are inspected or if you are found in that most dreaded and unwanted situation of being subject to an investigation due to a serious mishap or fatality. We can help with all of that!

As you plan for the spring turnout and summer work unfolds you must have a plan for working alone, or in isolation. This is an established and documented system where you can check in, where you can activate assistance if you need it, and where someone is able to start an effort to find you if should fail to return as planned. We can help with that!

New and returning workers require an orientation, as do workers new to a task or job. It is always our goal to make the orientation applicable to you and our team has both the availability and the ability to work with you to ensure that we create a viable orientation. An orientation that

covers the general requirements of the applicable legislation to the site and the task that you will be hiring or asking someone to do. Recently a number of court proceedings, including the prosecution of employers, have commenced or been resolved through the courts. These issues have centered around the failure of an employer to conduct an orientation for a new or returning worker. These must be done. We can help you with that!

Employees must be adequately instructed and their competency determined in any task that you direct them to undertake. They will need to be instructed and that instruction will need to be documented and their competency established by you prior to enabling them to perform that job. We can help you with that!

Jobs that are of significant risk need to have an assessment done for that task. This includes considering who could get hurt, how that person could get hurt, and how badly. Control measures then need to be established to eliminate or reduce that risk and a related safe work practise created to address the issue. We can help you with that!

Special attention is required when ensuring that the operators of tractors, ATV’s, or other “mobile equipment” have been properly instructed, their competency proven to you, the supervisor, and those results documented. This is of huge importance because we are only allowed



to have people operate these items based upon their demonstrated competency to a qualified supervisor. We MUST do this, because it is a very suitable and site available means of training and engaging operators. If we fail to do this, the day may well come when we will be required to have external authorization, perhaps even something like a tractor licence, an ATV licence, etc. We never want to go down that path so do the instruction, determine the competency and keep the records. Not sure how to go about that? We can help with that!

There are many components of these things that you are already doing, what is usually missing is the ability to prove it, the regard given to safety is, in most cases, never in question. BUT, the ability to show that you have properly oriented a worker, trained them, made provision for their working alone or in isolation, provided a means to obtain first aid, completed risk assessments and developed and trained in safe work practises, is often not in place. Inspections of your workplace are always important and an officer of WorkSafeBC will want to see records of those occurring. We can help you with that!

You need to have meetings that discuss safety matters and these need to be documented, they don't need to be complicated they just need to be effective and done. We can help you with that!

Pre-shift inspections of mobile equipment must be done and records kept of such inspections prior to being put into use each shift.

You guessed it...we can help you with that,... all of that!

When it comes to doing what you do, you do it best. No question about that, but when it comes to building a safety program, attaining regulatory compliance, establishing a viable, realistic, "doable" safety management system that is just part of the way you do business, well, ... we can help you with that.

Come and discuss this at the AgSafe booth in Penticton at the BCCA AGM, travel safe, see you there!

About AgSafe

Committed to creating a safer work environment for BC's agricultural industry, AgSafe (formerly FARSHA) has Regional Safety Consultants and advisors throughout the province to implement site specific health and safety programs, safety courses, safety materials and advice.

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