Considerations of Agricultural Tasks
Working with Ranchers and Farmers

Wyoming ranchers and farmers (and their families) wear many hats each day. Consider the daily roles in relation to the hours in the day:

- Employer
- Consumer
- Laborer
- Teachers/mentors
- Operators
- Off-site responsibilities (committee/organization members, other jobs, school activities)

A lack of time while trying to fulfill these many obligations can increase stress, fatigue and increase injury potential.

Women
Women are at a greater risk for agricultural-related injuries. Many hold off-ranch jobs, have household responsibilities and care for children.

Children
Children are naturally curious. Equipment and some work-sites are enticing for play. Often times, children are assigned duties inappropriate for their developmental stage out of necessity.

Seniors
Senior ranchers often do not retire at 65. Many continue to work on the ranch until they are physically no longer able to do so. Ranchers and farmers over the age of 60 are at a much higher risk of injury than younger agriculturalists. Males over the age of 55 account for the majority of ag-related deaths.

All ranchers and farmers have three times the risk of injury and death than individuals employed in the private sector.

Typical Hazards and Risks
Emergency medical care is often not readily available.

Environments
Indoor hazards can include particulates in the air, such as molds, chemicals and dust. Older buildings may have loose boards, protruding nails or raised doorways. Noise can also be a risk factor when working indoors. Work surfaces may present hazards such as back injury or strain, while cluttered areas may lead to bruises, pinches, head injuries, etc.

Outdoor hazards may be the weather, sunlight, temperature changes, falls and noise are all prominent outdoor hazards.

Chemical exposure may lead to cancer, birth defects, chemical sensitivities, dermatitis or “farmer’s lung” amongst other things.
EQUIPMENT AND ANIMALS

Approximately 25% of ag-injuries result from livestock.

Daily livestock production tasks can include: feeding, watering, bedding, castration/medication, and transportation. Each of these presents opportunity for injury.

**Machinery** accidents are a common cause of ag-injuries. Equipment using **Power take-off (PTO) systems** can lead to entanglements, and hydraulic fluid punctures and burns while other machinery risks include: vibration-related injuries, runovers, entrapment, and crushing. Tractor over-turns are the single most common cause of fatal farm injuries.

Typical crop production tasks involve equipment use for preparing fields, tilling, drilling, irrigating, fertilizing, and harvesting.

Proper machinery maintenance can help prevent injury. Points on equipment which can be shielded and still functional should be covered. Areas that cannot be covered should be painted a bright color or include appropriate signage.

When equipment is raised, extra care should be taken. Machinery that can roll should have blocks placed behind wheels.

Hydraulic hoses should be inspected frequently. The tiniest hole can still allow for skin-penetrating jet streams.

**GENERAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

**Children** should be supervised and given age-appropriate tasks after complete instruction on the safe execution of the tasks.

Children under the age of four should have safe areas to play and kept under close supervision. Children five-nine years of age may begin with tasks including watering plants, feeding pets and collecting eggs. Age-appropriate tasks for children 10-13 years include yard work, supervised power tool use, and assisting with animal care. Thirteen to 16 year olds may begin operating equipment with supervision, increased animal interaction. Teens older than 16 may begin to increase equipment operation with proper training and supervision.

**Hand signals** can be useful when working with more than one individual in a loud setting or when one individual is navigating equipment operators from the ground.

Appropriate **signage** should include, “no trespassing” and should indicate potentially hazardous storage areas, chemicals, etc.

Ponds, manure pits, electrical boxes, etc. should be kept fenced and locked.

Fences should be kept in good repair and male animals should not be pastured where they are accessible to the public.

**For more information**

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