

Child Safety on the Farm

Many children and adolescents live and/or work on farming operations. Living on or visiting family farms can be fun for children, however, they can also be dangerous due to the very nature of farming activities. From equipment and machinery to chemicals and livestock, identifying and controlling hazards is critical. It is the adult's responsibility to be aware of children's surroundings to keep them away from these hazards.

Accidents involving children can be controlled through safety training and education on the hazards that exist on the farm or ranch.

Education/Operator Safety

- Varying levels of supervision is needed for children of all ages. While young children cannot be left alone, as children get older, the need for direct supervision may decrease. As children engage in more activities on the farm, parents must watch to make sure work activities are being done safely.
- When children do begin helping with farm work, proper training is essential. Adults should keep in mind each child's age, strength, and experience level when conducting training. It is important to ensure that children understand the safe operating procedures.
- Educate children on what to do in the event of an emergency.
- Whenever safety rules are broken, adults must make time for explanation and enforcement.
- Set a good example and follow safety procedures.
- Children should not be allowed to operate machinery until they are big enough to reach all of the controls and they should be thoroughly trained in the safe operation of equipment before start-up.

- Children should not be allowed in areas where work is underway unless they are old enough to be assisting in the work activity. An operator simply can not work with machinery and watch for children at the same time.
- One of the most important safety rules on the farm is NO PASSENGERS – EVER on tractors or other farm equipment. Allow enough time for helpers to walk to and from fields, or provide a safe means of transportation.

Equipment and Farm Safety

- Hazards must be regularly identified and corrected. Children are extremely curious and lack adult judgment.
- Hazardous materials, such as pesticides, should always be kept out of reach of children and stored in a locked cabinet or shed.
- Machinery should be maintained and in good repair, with all protective shields in place. Children must understand that they are not allowed to play with idle machinery.
- Children should not be allowed to rest, nap, or play around equipment or trailers, even if they are not in use.
- Equipment that might fall, such as the buckets on front-end loaders, should be left in the down position. When self-propelled machinery is parked, brakes should be locked and keys removed from the ignition. Tractor power take offs (PTOs) should always be left in neutral. When starting machinery visually locate children to ensure that everyone is clear from the area.

- The bottoms of fixed ladders should be out of reach or fitted with a special barrier. Portable ladders should be stored and secured.
- Restricting children's access to certain areas on the farm may be required. Fencing or other protective barriers may be necessary to ensure that children do not enter certain areas that may pose extreme hazards. Examples include:
 - Silos
 - Grain bins
 - Farm ponds and lagoons
 - Feed mills
 - Canals
 - Electrical boxes and wiring
 - Heights
 - Livestock pens
- It is important that barns, shops, and sheds are maintained and that good housekeeping is implemented.

Employment and Performance of Work

Employee's children and minors who are non-family members should not be given special privileges.

- Employees' children should not be allowed to work unless they have a proper work permit and are approved to work by the employer.
- Children under 16 years of age should not be allowed to operate tractors, equipment or machinery or to work in other hazardous job activities.
- Minors under the age of 18 may not mix or load certain pesticides.

It is important to continually reinforce safety. Children often need reminders and it is critical that the safety rules are strictly enforced. While we need to expect children to follow the safety rules, adults have the ultimate responsibility for safety on the farm or ranch. Your child's safety depends on you.

For additional information or assistance, contact your Zenith Safety & Health consultant.

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com[®]**

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