

## Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls on the Dairy

### Introduction

Every year dairy workers are seriously injured due to slips, trips and falls. Slips and falls frequently occur on level surfaces, such as in the milk barn, lanes, and pens. Falls may also occur from heights, such as from haystacks and equipment. Injuries caused by falling from heights are often serious. To prevent injuries from slips, trips and falls in dairies requires the understanding of these hazards and controls for prevention. Taking a few precautions and observing safety rules can prevent injury or even save your life. Four key areas where these exposures can occur include: Milking Parlor and Herding Cows, Farming, Hay Stacks and Silage Piles, and Ladders.

### Milking Parlor and Herding Cows

Milking operations are frequently 24 hours/7 days a week. There are a number of slip, trip and fall hazards associated with the process of milking cows. Bringing cows to the milking parlor from the corrals can be challenging. Muddy terrain, manure on the ground, pot holes and uneven concrete pads can cause an employee to slip, trip, and fall. In addition, milking parlors are cleaned regularly throughout each shift. Excess water and manure on the ground during the milking process and raised sprinkler valves used for cleaning of cows prior to milking can create potential hazards.

The following safety guidelines should be observed by all employees during milking parlor (milk barn) operations to prevent slips, trips and falls:

- Ensure that personal protective equipment such as rubber boots are worn and inspected prior to each shift. Rubber boots must be slip resistant and replaced when treads are worn.
- Damaged concrete must be repaired and holes filled.

- Walkways, ramps, and steps must be clear of obstructions and kept clean.
- Flushes for lanes should be completed on a scheduled basis.
- Good drainage is critical. Keep all concrete lanes and walkways free of standing water to prevent algae growth, which is slippery.
- Ensure that all open pits and drains have covers or guard rails.
- Employees should not climb over or sit on gates and fences.
- Maintain adequate lighting for better visibility during night operations.
- Prohibit horse play at all times.
- Ensure that barns, fences, and milking equipment are properly maintained.

### Farming

Farming and dairy operations go hand-in-hand with dairies often raising much of their own feed and silage. There are a number of slip, trip and fall hazards associated with farming operations which include: getting on and off tractors and other farming equipment, falling into manure pits, or tripping/slipping on uneven ground or muddy terrain.

The following are a few safety guidelines to prevent slip, trip and fall injuries in the farming operation:

- Never allow a passenger to ride any equipment not designed by the manufacturer for more than one person. This includes hay trailers. Riders have a high risk of falling off of the equipment.

- Always establish three points of contact when mounting or dismounting tractors, equipment, farming vehicles, and feeder trucks.
- Never jump from tractors, trailers, or any other equipment.
- Keep steps and platforms on tractors and mobile equipment in good condition and clean.
- Wastewater lagoons should be properly fenced to keep people and cattle out.
- Ensure that safety signage is used to warn employees of manure pits, lagoons, and other confined spaces.
- Take extra precaution when working in muddy terrain or uneven ground. Walk carefully and avoid running or making quick movements.

### Hay Stacks and Silage

Dairy cattle are fed throughout the day. Fall exposures associated with the process of feeding cattle include: climbing on hay stacks, stacking bales, and loading hay trailers for feeding. Silage piles also have fall hazards when employees are untarping the open edge or working too close to the edge. Falls from these operations can result in serious injuries or even death.

The following are a few safety guidelines to prevent slip, trip and fall injuries when working around hay and silage:

- If possible, ensure that the hay squeeze is used to retrieve hay bales from heights.
- If it is necessary to climb hay stacks, use a well maintained ladder resting on solid ground and tie the ladder off at the top, if possible.
- Ensure that employees do not jump from haystack.
- Ensure proper use of hay hooks.
- Inspect hay stacks for uneven stacking and damaged bales.
- Avoid stacking silage higher than 12 feet.
- Use a front loader to break down silage versus

shoveling or working from the top.

- Never allow employees to shovel at the open edge of the silage.
- Ensure that hay and silage is stored on even ground.
- Remove silage from the top first, never undercut the pile.
- When removing the tarp from the pile, keep a safe distance from the edge and never step in an area where edge looks like it could break away.

### Ladder Safety

Ladders are often used to access heights in dairy operations. They are frequently used to gain access to the top of haystacks, for maintenance activities in the milk barn or other structures, and to get to the top of milk tanks. Using the wrong ladder or one that is damaged can create a significant hazard. Falls from ladders can result in serious injuries or even death.

The following are some safety guidelines when using ladders:

- Select a ladder suitable for the job.
- Inspect ladders prior to use to make sure they are in safe condition.
- Ladders that are damaged should be removed from service and destroyed.
- Use ladders made with non-slip rungs.
- Keep the ground or floor around the area where the ladder is used clear of equipment and debris.
- Do not overreach.
- Do not go beyond the recommended safe step.
- Keep your ladder close to the job at all times.
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder at all times.

- Portable ladders should not be used to access tanks.
- Use a scissor or aerial lift when ladder access is not feasible.

### Summary

It is important to continually reinforce safety. Educating dairy employees and enforcing strict safety rules, such as the use of personal protective equipment, are critical in preventing injuries related to slips, trips, and falls. Employees should report all slip, trip, and fall hazards immediately.

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