



SAFE Rural

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

SAFE Rural goes electronic

From 2010 the *SAFE Rural* newsletter will be merged with our electronic eSAFE newsletter. This will be a way of making our newsletter more accessible to everyone and responding to the needs of our readers, regularly providing you with the latest workplace health and safety information.

You will need to subscribe to receive future editions by going to our website at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au and clicking on 'subscribe to eNEWS' on the homepage. While you're there, visit the *SAFE Rural* page where prior issues of the newsletter can be downloaded.

Your continued feedback about this newsletter is needed. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has been working hard to improve the types of articles we publish, but we can only improve it further if you keep telling us what you want. Any feedback can be provide by:

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Between a rock and a hard place

Taking a few risks when working on your property may seem like the quick answer, but it could end up as a disaster. Ultimately everyone deserves to go home after a day's work, a little dirty, but safe to their family and friends.

A new short film has been produced by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland about the story of Garry Nichols' tractor roll-over incident that happened 17 years ago. The incident is still very real, just as vivid in Garry's mind now as it was back then.

Garry was one of the lucky ones. He lost a leg, he lost his farm, but he hasn't lost his fighting spirit and he admits that those few seconds changed the rest of his life forever.

The film is available on the website and we invite viewers to take a look. Visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Being safe at work is a key message from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. Think beyond what an incident might do to you, think about the impact it will have on your family, your relationship, your finances, your friends and neighbours, even the police and inspectors who have to follow through with an investigation.

National harmonisation of occupational health and safety legislation.

Safe Work Australia is currently developing national model laws which will be implemented in all Australian jurisdictions by 1 January 2012. For more information go to the Safe Work Australia website: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

Fatalities – a sad reminder to stay safe

A rural fatality involving contact with a high voltage powerline occurred late last year, highlighting the need for vigilance around electricity.

While still under investigation, such incidents reinforce the importance of being safe around electricity.

A kite at the incident site was found to be tangled on a 19 000 volt powerline adjacent to a high voltage transformer.

Electrical fatalities in Queensland's rural industry commonly involve workers contacting overhead powerlines through the use of machinery or moving irrigation pipes.

This recent fatality was unusual and tragic, but still serves as an important reminder. There remains a strong need to stay electrically safe when working, during any activity at home or anywhere else. Observe safe practices whenever you are near powerlines or doing anything that may bring you into contact with powerlines or any live electrical part.

Looking after a respirator

Respirators are essential pieces of equipment to be kept in good working condition. The tips below will help keep your respirators providing maximum protection.

1. Respirators should not be left in areas where they will be exposed to dusts, solvents and other chemicals as the filters will continue to absorb any organic vapours present which diminish their usefulness.
2. Filter cartridges should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations or when it becomes difficult to breathe through them. Write the date on the filter cartridge when replacing them to help you determine the amount of use or exposure time each cartridge has had.
3. Prolong the life of reusable filter respirators by:
 - removing the filters and inhalation and exhalation valves before cleaning
 - washing the face-piece with mild soap and water and rinsing thoroughly with clean water
 - checking all the parts and replacing any defective pieces
 - ensuring one-way valves are soft, pliable and functional and the face piece is soft, comfortable and provides a good face seal
 - storing the respirator in a clean plastic bag inside a locker or clean dry place, and
 - reducing deterioration by not storing respirators in direct sunlight or where exposed to extremes of temperature.

For further information see rural fact sheet 13 *Chemicals – Protective Equipment* at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Further rural exemptions removed

The removal of further exemptions for the rural industry occurred on 1 September 2009 requiring all rural property workers to be aware and comply with the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008* (Regulation).

The removal of these exemptions for the rural industry is part of the staged removal over two years from 1 September 2008 to 1 September 2010 to bring the rural industry in line with other Queensland industries.

This two-year staged removal ensures relevant persons in the rural industry are able to obtain appropriate training, education, certification and licensing where required.

The exemptions being revoked on 1 September 2009 involve rural activities in demolition, construction work and the use of hazardous substances.

Information to assist rural workers has been developed in rural fact sheet 27 *Construction Work at Rural Workplaces* and rural fact sheet 28 *Rural Industry Exemptions*. A new rural chemicals guide will also be available soon to rural workplaces containing information on herbicides, pesticides, hazardous substances, dangerous goods, flammable liquids, and agricultural and veterinary medicines.

For more information about the process for staging changes to rural industry exemptions or managing rural chemicals refer to www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Rural industry exemptions have been removed progressively since 1990 in line with an agreement between rural industry peak bodies and successive governments. Further exemptions will be removed in 2010 regarding registrable plant design, high risk work, workplace health and safety officers, confined spaces and atmospheric contaminants.

Use elevating work platforms safely

New safety measures have been developed for the orchard and banana growing industries for the safe use of elevating work platforms (EWPs) after an analysis of Queensland's workers compensation injuries and a coronial investigation into the death of a banana worker in 2004.

The investigating coroner recommended workers should wear a harness while operating an EWP. In 55 per cent of workers compensation injury cases reviewed, it would have been appropriate for the operator to wear a harness to reduce risk of injury.

Serious injury can occur from EWPs if an operator falls from the working platform, an individual over-balances, or the machine rolls over, contacts powerlines or collapses due to mechanical failure.

Three new rural fact sheets have been published by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland to:

- improve EWP operating safety
- increase the level of regular maintenance, inspection and repair
- ensure safe design features through design registration.

Rural fact sheet 29 outlines that EWP operators should wear a harness attached to an anchor point (where provided) by a lanyard of a length so that the operator cannot: fall from the platform, stand on the mid rail or be suspended outside of the platform top rail. Where an anchor point is not available a secondary gate restraint must be engaged, unless the manufacturer's design prevents ejection of the operator from the platform.

Rural fact sheet 30 describes four types of machine inspections that should be undertaken as a result of machine failure that caused the death of the banana worker. EWPs must be regularly inspected by a competent person (such as the manufacturer, an engineering tradesperson or professional engineer) for signs of wear or failure of machine parts, particularly the joints securing the working platform, including:

- pre-operational or daily checks
- routine or pre-harvest inspections
- annual or third party inspections, and
- major inspections that include a strip, inspection and re-build of the EWP at the end of its design life.

Rural fact sheet 31 refers to the need for all new elevating work platforms (EWPs) or those that are modified to have their design registered by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland from 1 September 2010.

Design registration will be verified through a certificate number permanently marked on the item of plant so that it is clearly visible. The certificate of design registration will not be valid if items on the EWP, such as the boom, the working platform, or the levelling system, are altered, or if the various components replaced don't meet variance to the manufacturer's specifications.

The rural fact sheets are available from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Consistent standards for post drivers and grain augers

New standards on post drivers and grain augers were adopted by Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia in June 2009.

The adoption of these standards is the first consistent approach by a number of states in dealing with hazardous items of rural plant and demonstrates an effort to implement consistent occupational health and safety laws throughout Australia.

Grain augers and post drivers are potentially hazardous items of rural plant and, prior to these standards being adopted, there was no practical guidance available on their design and use.

These industry safety standards provide practical information to assist designers, manufacturers, suppliers and users of post drivers and grain augers.

The post driver and the grain auger standards emphasise the safe use of these types of equipment. The standards address the necessity for guarding moving parts and auger flighting, safety when using wire ropes, managing controls and having emergency stops, maintaining hydraulic systems and ensuring electrical safety. The standards also discuss manufacturer and supplier responsibilities.

The industry safety standards were first published in April 2007 and reviewed in September 2008.

Information on the standards can be found in the publications section of www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.



Safe Work Australia Week

Around 100 Queenslanders die each year as a result of work-related injuries and nearly 30 000 are seriously injured. On average this means 82 workers every day of the year and 576 every week are so badly injured they require more than five days off work.

Workers' compensation claims showed the rural sector had high fatality rate at 6.1 deaths per 100 000 workers. That is almost double the fatality rate for workers in all Queensland industries.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland held several events across Queensland during Safe Work Australia Week (25–31 October 2009) to focus the attention of Queenslanders on reducing workplace deaths, injuries and diseases.

One key event to help encourage the rural industry was the rural safety field day, held in Mackay on 27 October at the Bureau of Sugar Experimental Station (BSES).

Shane Webcke, retired rugby league legend, and Queensland's SWAW safety ambassador, spoke about his on-farm experiences, including the death of his father as a result of a workplace incident.

Shane also launched Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's new rural-focused short film, *Between a rock and a hard place – The Garry Nichols story*. The film relives a tractor roll-over incident 17 years ago and highlights the ongoing impact on family and friends capturing the long term physical, emotional and financial implications of a serious workplace incident. To view or download the film visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

The safety field day also consisted of an emergency rescue scenario, a quad bike rider safety demonstration, a chainsaw demonstration, exhibitions of agricultural safety supplies and products, and information about workplace health and safety programs.

Tractor safety

The three major elements of risk in operating tractors are:

- the tractor operator
- the tractor
- the environment.

The more risks that are taken to undertake the task the greater the risk of severe injury or fatality.

The tractor operator must be competent at operating the particular tractor they are required to use. They must be aware of the degree of risk that the job holds, and they must have current skill and ability to undertake the task safely. The only person on a tractor should be the operator.

The tractor operator has the responsibility of being aware of and not endangering other workers.

The operator must be fit to drive. Are they capable of doing the job safely? Are they too sick, tired, angry, young or old to drive properly? Are they taking any medications or other substances that might adversely affect judgment, attention, or reaction time?

