

Welcome to SAFE Rural

Welcome to the first edition of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's SAFE Rural newsletter. This free quarterly publication aims to provide readers with the latest information on rural workplace health and safety.

The newsletter replaces the Farm Safety News publication and forms a liftout in 'SAFE' – a larger magazine dedicated to workplace health and safety issues in Queensland. To subscribe to the full SAFE magazine, see the back page of this publication.



Spring 2005

National campaign to prevent the sale of unsafe rural equipment

In a concerted effort to reduce the risk of hazardous rural equipment entering the marketplace, Australia's workplace health and safety bodies are banding together for a national audit campaign.

The audit will target manufacturers, suppliers and importers of agricultural plant, particularly those involved in tractors, agricultural attachments, all terrain vehicle (ATV) accessories and grain augers.

The audit, which started this month (September), will involve inspectors visiting nearly 750 businesses across Australia, including 200 in Queensland. It is the first ever coordinated audit of rural equipment manufacturers, suppliers and importers in Australia.

Principal Rural Advisor Keith Ferguson said the campaign is about using early intervention to reduce the number of incidents on Australian farms.

"This audit aims to help reduce plant-related injuries by ensuring manufacturers, suppliers and importers are delivering safe machinery and equipment to their customers," Mr Ferguson said.

"Traditionally, the users of rural plant have been the target of our activities. However this audit recognises that manufacturers, suppliers and importers are also a key part of the safety equation.

"As this is the first audit of its kind in Australia, our key focus will be on gauging the level of compliance in the industry and helping educate businesses on their safety obligations.

"Rural plant safety is a national concern, particularly as plant is often bought and sold interstate. This audit will help ensure manufacturers, suppliers and importers in all states are meeting standardised safety requirements."

Rural producers also need to be aware that if they modify, build or sell plant and equipment they are subject to the same legal obligations as commercial manufacturers and suppliers.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland conducted free seminars throughout the State from 23 August – 2 September to help manufacturers, suppliers and importers understand their obligations.

For further information on the audit phone 1300 369 915.



Photo: Mark Burgin

New sugar code of practice to improve safety

In an important step forward for health and safety in the sugar industry, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has released a new sugar industry code of practice.



Photo: Goprint

Some of the main changes associated with the new code are outlined below.

- **Sugar Industry Code of Practice 2005** – There is now an overarching Sugar Industry Code of Practice for the industry. The code addresses overarching health and safety procedures such as risk management, data collection, consultation and training. It also addresses common health and safety issues such as heat stress, fatigue, manual tasks and noise.
- **Sugar Mill Safety Supplement** – The Sugar Mill Safety Supplement forms part of the Sugar Industry Code of Practice. The supplement includes expanded health and safety guidelines for the management of bagasse dust, heat stress and electrical safety.
- **Cane Rail Safety Supplement** – The Cane Rail Safety Supplement also forms part of the Sugar Industry Code of Practice. The supplement provides information on managing hazards specific to cane railways, including derailment, contact between trains and field traffic, and contact with overhead powerlines.

Look up and live — electrical safety in rural communities

Staying a safe distance from overhead powerlines could save lives, prevent injury and stop costly damage.

That's the warning from Queensland's Electrical Safety Office following a number of injuries this year and a fatality when equipment came into contact with overhead powerlines.

People operating plant, farm equipment and other machinery should look out for overhead powerlines to make sure their equipment is not likely to enter the safety exclusion zone.

Queensland safety laws define a 'no go' zone around energised powerlines which is off limits to everyone, unless they have been properly trained and authorised to carry out work near exposed live parts.

The no go zone or exclusion zone is most commonly three metres for powerlines on wood or concrete poles,

but can be up to eight metres for powerlines on steel pylons. The exclusion zone exists because you, or your equipment, don't need to touch the conductor to receive an electric shock – many powerlines carry high voltages that can cause the electricity to arc or jump through the air.

Trucks, farm equipment, irrigation equipment, augers, cranes, concrete booms, excavating equipment and elevating platforms have all been involved in electrical incidents because they came within the exclusion zone.

Information about electrical safety laws and exclusion zones is available from the Electrical Safety Office at www.dir.qld.gov.au.

Stay safe around overhead power lines by ensuring your equipment does not enter the safety exclusion zone.

Have you claimed your ROPS rebate?

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is reminding all tractor owners to install a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and claim their government rebate.

ROPS are a life-saving device that can prevent drivers from being crushed when a tractor rolls over or backflips. The ROPS rebate helps tractor owners meet the cost of installing these critical safety devices.

New workplace health and safety regulation came into effect on 1 July 2003 requiring most tractors to be fitted with ROPS. To help owners meet the cost of fitting ROPS, the Queensland Government is offering tractor owners a WorkCover funded rebate.

The level of the ROPS rebate is determined by the date of installation:

- \$200 – 28 April 2005 to 27 April 2006
- \$150 – 28 April 2006 to 27 April 2007.

From 1 July 2007, it will be mandatory to install ROPS on tractors. The ROPS regulation applies to all workplaces bound by the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* – not just the rural sector.

To apply for a ROPS rebate or for further information, visit www.dir.qld.gov.au or phone 1300 369 915.

Common misconceptions about ROPS

Misconceptions:

- “I never drive fast on a tractor, so I don’t need ROPS.”
- “I’m an experienced operator. I won’t have an accident on my tractor.”
- “I only work on flat country – it’s unlikely I will rollover.”

Research indicates:

- most tractor accidents occur at speeds of less than eight kilometres per hour
- most operators involved in accidents have more than five years experience on tractors
- most accidents occur on slopes of less than five degrees.

Tractor safety tips

The following tips can help keep you and your workers safe while using tractors on the farm.

General safety precautions

- install a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS)
- read and follow all of the manufacturer’s operating instructions
- conduct risk assessments to identify and control tractor hazards
- train drivers in the safe use of tractors. Training should be specialised for the particular needs of the farm
- keep all guards in place, including power take off (PTO) guards
- wear comfortable close-fitting clothing, boots and hearing protection
- undertake and keep records of regular inspections and maintenance.

Travel and operate safely

- adjust the seat so all controls can be operated comfortably and safely. Wear a seat belt where it is fitted but only if a ROPS is present
- operate the self-starter only from the driving position. Do not start the tractor from the ground
- drive at speeds slow enough to retain control over the unexpected
- take short breaks regularly when working long hours
- don’t dismount from a moving tractor
- don’t carry passengers
- keep children away from tractors and machinery.

These are just some measures you can use to improve tractor safety. For more information, visit www.dir.qld.gov.au.

Get a broader view of the health and safety issues in Queensland Get the full SAFE magazine.

SAFE is a free publication dedicated to bringing you the latest information on workplace health and safety news, initiatives and legislation.

The magazine covers news from a range of key Queensland industries and includes the SAFE Rural liftout.

- get great ideas from other industries that can be used on your farm
- learn even more about workplace health and safety regulations
- obtain updates on the latest prosecutions and audits.

Contact details

Editorial

We welcome your feedback on SAFE Rural. To contact the editorial team email us at safe@dir.qld.gov.au or phone 07 3404 3546.

Workplace health and safety information

For further information on workplace health and safety matters contact Workplace Health and Safety Queensland:

Web www.dir.qld.gov.au

Infoline 1300 369 915

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