



Maine Farm Safety Program

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Choosing Safe Clothing for Farm Work

Wearing the proper clothes to work can help prevent some injuries to the body. Various jobs require different protective clothing.

Work Clothing

Protecting the body with the proper clothing can help prevent injuries or lessen any that occur. When selecting clothing to wear to work, wear nothing that dangles, is untucked or tattered. These can get caught and possibly draw you into the machine. Keep jewelry to a minimum. Metal is an excellent conductor of electricity, so do not wear any jewelry (including a wedding band) when working with electricity or heavy machinery. Pull back long hair so that it does not interfere with your work or get caught in any machinery that you may be using.

Torso protection is available as vests, jackets, aprons, coveralls and full body suits. Wool and specially treated

cotton are two natural fibers that are fire-resistant and comfortable since they adapt well to changing workplace temperatures. Duck, a closely-woven cotton fabric, is good for light duty protective clothing. It can protect against cuts and bruises on jobs where employees handle heavy, sharp or rough material. Heat-resistant clothing, such as leather, is often used to guard against dry heat and flame. Rubber and rubberized fabrics, neoprene, and plastics give protection against some acids and chemicals. Disposable suits of paper-like material are

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- **Avoid tattered, dangling or untucked clothing.**
- **Wear safety hats when the job warrants it.**
- **Wear gloves and boots to match the job.**

particularly important for protection from dusty materials or materials that can splash. If the substance is extremely toxic, a completely enclosed suit may be necessary.

Pads are available to protect the shoulders and back when carrying heavy loads or rough-edged objects. Padded leather or hard fiber aprons will help protect the body from blows. Wear knee pads for continued kneeling, crawling, or working on hands and knees.

Caps/Heads

Protective head gear, such as safety hats and bump caps, could prevent most head injuries common in agricultural work. Know when to wear them and what type. Post signs in areas where hard hats must be worn. Make sure everyone entering that area uses them, even if it is just for a minute. Jobs requiring protection include building work, operating and repairing machinery, felling or trimming trees, entering or leaving buildings with low doors, working in close quarters or under low ceilings, blasting, and running off-road vehicles.

Different types of hats provide different types of protection. Hard hats come in two types. Type one has a full brim that is not less than 1 ¼ inches wide and type two is brimless with a peak extending forward from the crown. Each protects against impact and varying degrees of electrical shock. Each type has various classes marked on the inside. There are three classes labeled A, B and C. Class A is for general service and offers limited voltage protection. It

is used when impact hazards are present and in lumbering. Class B is for utility service and provides high voltage protection. These also protect against impacts and are mostly used by electrical workers. Class C helmets are for special services and offer no voltage protection. They are light weight, comfortable and protect against impacts. They are usually made of aluminum. Know the type needed for the job and the hazards present.

Non-metallic hard hats are good all around choices for agriculture. They offer impact protection and also resist water, burning and electrical shock. Lightweight metal hats made of aluminum alloy are comfortable and light. Never wear metal hats where there is danger of electrical contact. Bump caps are light-weight, thin-shelled protective headgear. They offer good protection from ordinary head bumps and blows sustained while working in close quarters, under low ceilings, in the shop, or repairing machinery. Hats with suspension provide good scalp ventilation in hot weather, and liners are available for winter.

Take special care of hard hats used on the farm. Inspect them regularly. Clean the suspension regularly with mild soap and water. Adjust the suspension so that it sits squarely on the head. Do not store anything between the suspension and the shell. Do not wear anything under them unless it is an approved liner specifically made for that purpose. Deep scratches or cuts may cause hard

hats to split on impact. Stiff, brittle, faded, dull or chalky shells indicate degradation. Immediately replace hats with signs of degradation. Do not repair shells or paint them. Repairing and painting can affect the electrical insulating ability or soften it and hide flaws. Discard a damaged hard hat, even if it has sustained an impact without any visible damage. Do not drill any holes in the hats or store them in the rear window of a vehicle. Sunlight can affect its protective quality. Automatically replace hard hats every two years if they have been continuously exposed to temperature extremes, sunlight or chemicals.

Never use hard hats for anything other than head protection. Do not use them as seats, hammers, step stools or water buckets. Do not store things in them.

Hands and Arms

Hands are the most frequently injured part of the body on the farm. During a day's work, a farmer's hands might come into contact with chemicals, harsh detergents, paint, solvents, rough materials, and sharp tools. Scalded, burned or frostbitten hands can be a problem. Cuts and abrasions on the hands may allow toxic chemicals to enter the body. These cuts, if not cleaned properly, may lead to infections. Use appropriate gloves, barrier creams, hand cleaners and lotions to protect hands.

Wearing gloves that match the job provides good hand protection. Only sound, properly fitting gloves should be worn. Overly tight gloves limit dexterity and

are uncomfortable and overly large gloves can interfere with work. Use caution when wearing gloves near moving machinery parts. Gloved hands can be drawn into machines and the hands severely injured. Gloves to protect the hands can be made of rubber, plastic, neoprene or other materials and should be unlined. Wire mesh, leather and canvas gloves protect against burns and cuts. Gloves insulated with rubber provide electrical protection. They should be long enough to cover the entire hand and part of the forearm. Wearing long sleeves will provide an extra barrier for the skin along with the gloves.

After using chemicals and before removing your gloves, rinse and clean them thoroughly. After removing your gloves, wash your hands again.

Make sure you have extra gloves on hand. When gloves wear out, throw them away and use another pair. If there is any question about whether the gloves leak, do not use them. There is a simple way to test them to see if they leak. Fill them with water and squeeze the top. If water comes out the palm or fingers, replace the gloves.

A pair of stout leather or leather-reinforced gloves are the cornerstone of agricultural hand protection. Leather provides good gripping power and protects hands when handling rough or abrasive materials. It also protects the hands from some sharp objects and cutting tools if slips happen. Special heavy leather gloves are available for



welding or torching, but should never be used to handle pesticides.

Feet

Toes and feet can be injured during farm work. Poorly fitting or improper footwear can cause slips, trips or falls. Safety shoes should be worn every day.

When purchasing footwear for work, know the jobs it will be worn for. There are many different kinds of footwear on the market for specific jobs. When trying on footwear, wear socks that would normally be worn while working. This will ensure a proper fit. Footwear that fits properly and is appropriate for the job is the first step in foot safety.

Different footwear have different features. Steel-reinforced safety shoes protect your feet from common machinery hazards such as falling or rolling objects, cuts and punctures. The entire toe box and insole are steel-reinforced, and steel, aluminum or plastic materials protect the instep. These shoes also insulate against temperature extremes and may be equipped with special soles to guard against slips, chemicals, and electrical hazards. Built-in shin protection is also available. Different soles offer protection from things such as slipping and puncture.

Safety footwear comes in many varieties and which type used will depend on the specific hazards faced. Aluminum alloy, fiberglass or galvanized steel footguards can be worn over usual workshoes for protection. However, they can catch on something

and trip workers. Boots offer protection when splash or spark hazards are present. When working with corrosives, caustics, cutting oils, or petroleum products, wear neoprene or nitrile boots to prevent penetrations. Leggings protect the lower leg and feet from molten metal or welding sparks. Foundry or “gaiter” style boots (often used in welding operations) feature quick-release fasteners or elasticized insets to allow speedy removal should any hazardous substance get into the boot itself. When working with electricity, you should consider special electrical hazard boots that contain no conductive materials.

Inspect footwear regularly. When they wear out, dispose of them and purchase new ones. Clean and condition the leather regularly. Make sure the shoe laces are not fraying and cannot be caught in equipment. Replace laces that are worn out or too long.

Remove, repair or report foot hazards. Clean up spills, loose debris, broken glass, nails, broken tiles or other sharp objects. Watch for heavy objects that may fall. By taking care of these hazards, accidents can be prevented or reduced.

This Maine Farm Safety fact sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.

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