

Appalling Farm Safety Record

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) have recently issued the results of their Farm Safety Week inspection campaign, which took place in April of this year. During that week, the HSA inspected 371 farms, an enforcement action was taken in 44 cases. In 21 of those cases, the risk to safety was so high that inspectors had to serve notice to shut down certain activities on the farms. The majority of the actions were prohibition notices regarding the absence of a PTO (power take off) guard and other unguarded machinery. Additional actions were also taken for poor electrical installation and slurry handling facilities. The counties of Carlow, Mayo and Limerick had the highest number of enforcement actions.

Agriculture remains one of the two most high-risk workplace sectors. Last year, along with construction, it accounted for over 55% of all workplace fatalities. Machinery is still the main cause of serious injuries and fatalities on farms.



Year	No. of Fatalities on Irish Farms
2005 (to date)	10
2004	15
2003	19
2002	13

So far this year we have had 10 fatalities in the agricultural sector. Last year 15 people including 1 child died in accidents in the sector. This highlights the fact that in farming there is a particular and often fatal risk posed to children, especially from their proximity to machinery such as tractors, and this requires extra vigilance. It is essential that tractor operation and the guarding of machinery are seen as a top priority on farms. The HSA have also identified a growing trend of deaths among the elderly in farm accidents. Last year, almost 50% of people who died on farms were aged 65 or older.

The HSA and the Farm Safety Advisory Committee recently co-hosted a conference on farm safety at which they emphasised the importance of completing their farm safety self assessment document, which helps prevent accidents and protect lives on farms.

To prevent any more unnecessary loss of life on farms, farmers must realise that safety is not a needless hassle but it is a necessity and a potential “life saver”. Farmers must accept that their occupation is a hazardous one and they should take all necessary steps to minimise the risks to themselves, their workers and their families. The recent Farm Safety Week 2005 programme included a number of innovative measures designed to raise safety standards on Irish farms through the co-operation of the farmers themselves. The week focused on areas such as Safety for the Elderly on Farms, Completion of Farm Safety Self Assessment Document and Tractor Maintenance.

