

Health & Safety Update | July 2017

Welcome to Strutt & Parker's Farm Research Group Health & Safety Update

The quarterly Health & Safety Update is to assist you in ensuring that you are thinking about topical health and safety matters on your farm and/or estate. Health and safety is a vital part of any business operation.

Summer is now officially upon us, for some harvesting has already begun with silage and hay being cut for livestock winter fodder, for others the combine is ready and waiting to go and summer staff have started to arrive on farm for the busiest time of the year.

For further assistance or information on the issues discussed below, please call your nearest Strutt & Parker office.

Trailed equipment

The summer months will see a variety of trailed equipment being used from flatbed trailers for bales and seed to grain trailers to cultivation equipment, regardless of the function there are a number of factors which should always be considered when it comes to the safe operation and transportation of equipment.

- Check the tyres are in good condition and inflated to the correct pressure;
- Check road lights and indicators are working and are clean;
- Check any hydraulic pipes and couplings for damage, chafing and leakage;
- Check the hydraulics are working correctly for all normal functions be that body or tailgate lift, unfolding;
- Check that drawbars or auto hitch hook and eye are securely attached;
- Inspect the pickup hitch for damage or wear;
- Check brakes are fully operational;
- Check the trailer and all cables are correctly coupled to the towing vehicle;
- Any defects found should be rectified before further use, a trailer that is faulty must not be used.



When travelling on the road, ensure that any sharp or hazardous edges are covered or identified with suitable marker boards. Be aware of cyclists, who should be passed only when and where it is safe to do so, and with enough space between them and your vehicle; this minimises the draught created, to prevent them from falling off or, worse, being pulled under your vehicle. Cyclists can often match tractor speeds, particularly when on inclines, so you must be patient.

Consider what else is around you when operating trailers and the ground conditions. The biggest risks are the towing vehicle and/or trailer striking people, tipping a trailer body in the vicinity of overhead power lines, or working under unpropped trailer bodies. Instability can become a problem when operating on uneven/soft ground; never tip a trailer on soft ground, and never tip a trailer when working across a slope.

Sunshine

With employees working outside for many hours during the summer months it is important to remind them of the effects of the sun. Working during the heat of the day can cause dehydration, so it is important for staff to ensure they have enough to drink during the day to maintain their fluid levels. Another important consideration is skin protection; sunburn can be painful, and repeated overexposure to the sun can cause long term health issues, if suitable protection is not used. Protection can be as simple as keeping sheltered from the sun, or using sun creams of a suitable protection level for both the skin type and the level of exposure.

Vehicle hygiene and maintenance

Agricultural machinery inherently gets dirty during the working day, particularly from dust during the summer months. Dust can cause a number of problems for both machines and operators, it can obscure vision on dirty windows and mirrors, it can block radiators and filters, and a dusty environment can lead to breathing problems. A clean machine allows any defects to be identified quickly and, for those working to fix them, to work in a clean environment.

At the start of each day it is good practice to check the following.

- That there is good all-round visibility;
- Windows/windscreen are intact and clean;
- Mirrors are intact and clean;
- All warning systems (such as horns and lights) are fitted and working;
- Vehicle lights provide enough light for the driver to work;
- Windscreen wipers work;
- Tyres are appropriate for the road surface and are correctly inflated;
- Brakes are working and independent brakes are coupled together when on the road;
- Where trailers are being pulled they should have lights and appropriate signage displayed (if required);
- The cab is clean and free of any rubbish;
- There are no heavy items in the cab such as toolboxes, or spare/replacement parts.



It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that work vehicles and equipment are suitable for their purpose, taking into account working conditions and any hazards identified in the risk assessments. Before a vehicle is taken on the road, a visual inspection should always be carried out to ensure it is safe to be operated.

Abnormal loads

Abnormal load dispensations are required when moving large machinery more than five miles; this requires you to give the Police at least 24 hours' notice when moving machines in excess of 2.9 metres wide. Loads of up to 4.1 metres can be moved on non-motorway routes without a Police escort, but should be escorted by a separate vehicle. If a Police escort is required there may be a charge. Escort vehicles must have their headlights on and be fitted with a flashing amber light whilst on the public roads, and suitable signage such as 'Wide Load' is advisable.

Wherever possible, you should avoid moving abnormal loads during peak traffic times (07.30– 09.30 and 16.30 – 18.30), and the Police may prohibit you from moving abnormal loads during these times as part of any dispensation they issue. An escort driver or any other person or attendant to an abnormal load does not have any legislative powers to stop and/or control other road users. Machinery must be fitted with amber flashing lights that can be seen throughout 360 degrees. All extremities of vehicles and implements must be clearly visible at a reasonable distance at all times, and all cutting blades and sharp edges must be protected.



Dispensations are issued annually so it is important to renew any existing dispensation or apply for a new one before such a time as you may need one. The application process can be a time consuming exercise so it needs to be done prior to harvest.

Where dispensations have been registered, notification conditions can be reduced or, in some cases, removed altogether. The criteria within the dispensation vary from county to county, so applying in good time can help avoid potential problems during the harvest period. If you operate in different counties, you will need to apply for a dispensation for each county from the appropriate constabulary. Any dispensation normally only applies to vehicles owned and operated by the company granted the dispensation and the driver **MUST** carry a copy of the dispensation with them.

Carriage of passengers on farm trailers

Farm and estate visits are popular at this time of year, as the crops are ripening prior to harvest and stock are grazing with their young. As a result, many farms and estates will be transporting people around the countryside in modified farm trailers. It is important to ensure that both the trailer and the towing vehicle are in good working order; effective brakes, good tyres, working lights, sound towing eye and hook, securing pins in place. The deck of the trailer should be in good condition, without any holes or rotten timbers; it should not be possible for any passengers to be able to make contact with the wheels when traveling.

The driver should drive at speeds that will not jolt passengers, and that is appropriate to the terrain; any sudden speed changes should be avoided. Traveling on a public highway with passengers may be an offence under road traffic legislation, and should be checked with the Police to ascertain any additional precautions that may be required. Using trailers to carry passengers should meet with the following standards as a minimum.

- Passengers should be able to sit down.
- There should be a headboard, tailboard and sides to prevent passengers from falling. Guard rails/sides which passengers lean on when seated, the rail should be able to support the weight of the total number of people who are likely to lean on them.
- Nobody should stand when the trailer is in motion.
- Seating should enable passengers to sit facing either outwards or forwards.
- No-one should ride with their legs hanging over the sides.
- A safe means of access should be provided that is both rigid and able to be secured to the trailer.
- A responsible person should ride on the trailer to 'control' and help any passengers as required.
- There should be an effective method of communication between the driver and the responsible person.



Where a ladder or steps are being used for access, it should ideally be fixed, with the lowest rung or step no more than 550mm above ground level. There should be a secure handhold at the top between 920mm and 1070mm above the trailer floor level, to help people mounting or dismounting the trailer. The access position should be behind the trailer wheels. If a portable ladder is used, it should be rigid and strong enough for the purpose and secured in position before being used. It should accompany the trailer when it is being used to transport passengers.

Mobile phones

Mobile phones provide an important form of communication between individual employees and the farm/estate office on farms and estates. Farm radios have, in many cases, been replaced by mobile phones but radios still have their place particularly in areas with poor mobile reception and, during busy times when quick messages need to be communicated, two-way 'press to talk' radios can be used whilst driving although it is inadvisable unless absolutely necessary for example when escorting a wide load.

Whilst mobile phones provide a good form of communication they are only useful if close to hand particularly in an emergency. All employees should keep their mobile charged and on their person whenever they are at work. As farms and estates employ fewer people, the amount of lone working has increased; the risk of injury when on your own is greater. If the mobile phone is not on your person, it may be impossible to raise the alarm, potentially putting lives at risk.

Mobile phones should not be used when full concentration is required for the job in-hand (e.g. climbing ladders or when operating machinery). It is illegal to use a handheld mobile phone whilst driving. Legislation has been amended with effect from March 2017 for using a handheld mobile phone whilst driving. The penalties for doing so, even if you are otherwise driving safely, are as follows.

- A fine of £200 and six points on your licence. Six points would mean losing your licence if you passed your test within the last two years.
- If you refuse to accept the fixed penalty, or the police think the offence is so bad that a fixed penalty isn't enough, you could be taken to court. Fines in court will almost certainly be larger and disqualification is possible – the maximum fine in a court is £1,000.

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Edinburgh	0131 226 2500
Exeter	01392 215 631
Farnham	01252 821 102
Gerrards Cross	01753 891 188
Guildford	01483 306 565
Harpenden	01582 764 343
Harrogate	01423 561 274
Haslemere	01428 661 077
Horsham	01403 246 790
Inverness	01463 719 171
Ipswich	01473 214 841
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Moreton-in-Marsh	01608 650 502
Morpeth	01670 516 123
Newbury	01635 521 707
Northallerton	01609 780 306
Norwich	01603 617 431
Odiham	01256 702 892
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Pangbourne	0118 984 575
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