

HSE to visit farms as part of national inspection campaign

Farmers are being reminded they must change their attitude towards safety as Britain's workplace regulator readies itself for a wave of inspections in the coming months.

Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will visit farms across England, Scotland and Wales as part of a push to change the culture in the industry and check for compliance with long standing legal requirements.

People on farms are 21 times more likely to be killed in a workplace accident than other sectors.

In total, there have been 161 deaths on Britain's farms over the last five years – an average of 26 people each year. This includes members of the public and children.

The visits, from this week to next April, will focus on the main causes of death in farming, including working with cattle, operating and maintaining vehicles and falls from height.

They will also look at risks to members of the public, which often means the management of cattle around public rights of way, as well as child safety on the farm.

HSE plans to carry out 440 visits during the campaign.

One of the HSE inspectors helping organise and support the visits is Kathy Gostick, who offered the following advice to farmers:

"We will not only be checking farmers' knowledge of risk but also making sure they understand their responsibility to themselves and others. We will look at actions they have taken to control these risks and comply with the law."

Although, the number of deaths in the agricultural sector has fallen by around half since the early 1980s, the rate of fatalities, which is based on the number of people at work in the sector, has remained stubbornly high, much higher than comparable industries.

In a bid to reduce that number, Kathy Gostick has called for farmers to stop and think differently about their own and other peoples' safety.

"There are simply too many tragedies in farming and it is time for that to change.

"We are committed to making workplaces safer and healthier and that includes agriculture – we will do this by highlighting the risks, providing advice and guidance, and by holding employers to account for their actions.

“This means changing attitudes towards safety – it is the only way we will reduce the numbers of people being injured or killed.

“These upcoming inspections will help drive home the message that the only way we can bring down the numbers being injured or killed is if we change behaviour.”

Alongside inspections, HSE regularly gives advice on safe practice to key industry stakeholders, including at agricultural shows. The regulator is a key member of the Farm Safety Partnership.

There are many simple actions farmers can take to reduce the key risks:

- When using and maintaining vehicles consider [‘Safe Farm, Safe Driver, Safe Vehicle’](#) and follow ‘Safe Stop’ and use adequate props during maintenance.
- When handling cattle ensure good handling facilities are in place and used and that you have considered protection of members of the public when cattle are kept in field with public access. See [Handling and housing cattle AIS35 – HSE](#) and [Cattle and public access – HSE](#)
- When considering [working at height](#); avoid doing the work yourself – use a professional contractor instead. Don’t ever be tempted to use the wrong equipment – being lifted on the forks or bucket of a telehandler or fork lift truck is illegal. As is walking or working on fragile roof materials.
- When considering children on farms, try and avoid them being there in the first place and if not then full and complete supervision is required. See [Preventing accidents to children on farms INDG472\(rev4\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Earlier this year HSE launched [‘Your Farm – Your Future’](#) – a campaign focused on the number one cause of fatalities in agriculture – moving vehicles. The campaign website bringing together lots of great advice on controlling the key risks.

Notes to editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. HSE guidance on [working at height](#) and [what a good farm looks like](#) is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.