

It's time for farmers to 'think differently about safety' says regulator

A three-year-old child was among 27 people killed in agriculture-related activities in the last 12 months, as Britain's workplace regulator calls for farmers to 'think differently about safety'.

The call for a cultural shift away from poor behaviours comes as the rate of fatal injuries in the sector remains one of the highest of all major industries.

Provisional figures for 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 show that of the 27 people killed – 21 were workers with the three-year-old child among six members of the public to lose their lives.

Being killed by an animal (cattle) is the major cause of death in 2022-23. (Vehicle related incidents are the major cause when looking at the 5 year average.)

Although, the number of fatal injuries to workers 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 high with little change. The worker fatal injury rate is 21-times higher than the average five-year annual rate across all industries.

The most common causes of death in agriculture have not changed for many years. This year is no different. The five most common causes of work-related death in agriculture are:

- Being crushed or trampled by animals, usually cattle.
- Falling from height
- Being struck by a moving vehicle
- Coming into contact with machinery, during operation or maintenance
- Being struck by an object, such as bales or trees

Older workers, those aged 65 and older, accounted for a third of all worker fatalities.

Publication of the report ([Statistics – Work-related fatal injuries in Great Britain \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/work-related-fatal-injuries-in-great-britain)) coincides with the start of Farm Safety Week, which begins today (Monday 17 July) and runs until Friday.

Sue Thompson, Head of Agriculture, Health & Safety Executive, said:

"It is disappointing that yet again so many farming families and communities are left devastated when their loved ones are killed or suffer life changing illnesses caused by work.

“The number of fatalities remains stubbornly high and the rate of workplace fatal injury in agriculture still remains the highest of any sector.

“Agriculture is a vital part of the UK economy and it is not acceptable that it continues to fall short when it comes to managing risk in the workplace. It is all the more tragic that we still see children killed by farming activities. It’s time to think differently and not tolerate this any longer. Children must not be in farm workplace.

“We need everyone to play their part to improve the culture and change the poor behaviours we see far too frequently.”

- Earlier this year HSE launched [‘Your Farm – Your Future’](#) – a website bringing together lots of great advice on using vehicles safely on farms.

“I encourage everyone to think differently about safety, do things the right way and have the courage to ‘call out’ poor practices whenever they are seen.

“Agriculture will continue to be a priority sector for HSE. We are committed to making workplaces safer and healthier and holding employers to account for their actions, as part of our mission to protect people and places.

“Awareness of the hazards and health risks and legal requirements has never been higher. It’s great that Farm Safety Week brings the issue into focus.

“But it’s regrettable that we’re not yet seeing the widespread changes in attitude towards safety, and the improvements in behaviour that will reduce the numbers of people injured or killed.

“Everyone in agriculture has a role to play in making the changes we all want to see. It is only with the support and commitment of each and every farmer that we will see improvement. Together, we can make farming healthier and safer.”

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. The report highlights trends and provides summaries of each fatality involving employees, the self-employed and members of the public. The full report along with summaries of the circumstances of the individual fatal injuries can be read at – [Fatal injuries in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain: 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
3. Farm Safety Week is an initiative led by the Farm Safety Foundation and supported by the Farm Safety Partnerships, The Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and the

Health & Safety Authority, Ireland.

4. HSE continues to work with stakeholders across the farming and forestry sector to keep up the pressure to manage risk in the workplace to reduce the likelihood of serious injury, ill health and death.
5. For information on how to stay healthy and safe in agriculture see HSE guidance [What a good farm looks like – Agriculture \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/what-a-good-farm-looks-like-agriculture/) and [Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/farmwise/)
6. [The Your Farm – Your Future](https://www.yourfarm-yourfuture.com/) website – bringing together lots of great advice on using vehicles safely on farms is available.