

FARM SAFETY

By Marybeth Vargha

Many farms do not need costly alterations to become safety complaint, but do need to update or create written safety plans and worker trainings.

Safety program implementation

The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) has found during on-farm safety consultations that the process to implement an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliant safety program is not as onerous as it first seems.

Management needs to take the time to learn about the OSHA regulations. A sit down consultation and farm walk-through with a safety expert is the best first step to make a safer workplace.

On-farm consultation services are currently provided by NYCAMH and the New York Department of Labor. Several private organizations with agriculture experience also provide assistance.

Todd Fiske is safety consultant with NYCAMH. To become compliant many farmers were expecting costly alterations, but after many consultations Fiske finds that most of the focus is on writing safety plans and conducting worker trainings.

"That was much easier than CAFO," said a newly appointed safety officer to Fiske at a farm he was working with, referring to the implementation of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations standards.

Since the announcement last fall of OSHA's Local Emphasis Program, NYCAMH has joined with dairy industry organizations and service providers to help farmers work towards compliance.

So many resources are available that NYCAMH created a hotline service to serve as a clearinghouse of information. Contact this "Dairy Safety Program" line by calling 1-800-343-7527.

Worker training needs have expanded as employees need to be aware of all potentially hazardous tasks, even those they may not be assigned to, like confined spaces and electrical hazards.

Fiske noted that one very important change is the creation of the "Safety Officer" whose mission is to keep track of what needs to be done and the required documentation.

Many insights about how to address OSHA inspections have come from Wisconsin, the first state to have a dairy Local Emphasis Program.

Connie Smith of the Center for Dairy Farm Safety (CDFS) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, wanted to help New York farmers avoid some of the problems Wisconsin farmers faced over the last three years. Dairy safety information was limited and farmers may have spent more on consultants and improvements than they needed. The vacuum was filled by the creation of a CDFS 10-hour safety course, which is now also available as an online certification course for New York farmers.

More dairy workers in NYS are working on larger farms that fall under OSHA. In the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, the number of dairy farms in New York that reported hired labor is 2,350, with a total of 12,913 paid workers and another 5,904 unpaid. In 2012, 329 dairies reported ten or more hired workers, and OSHA is able to enforce on farms with 11 or more non-family employees.

NYCAMH and its partners are trying to reach out to these farms and their workers to make their occupation safer. With New York State support for

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The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health conducted an on-farm consultation in February.

FYI

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Safety program implementation

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the Roll-Over Protection System program, worker safety trainings, and health screenings, dairy farmers can find the help they need to do a better job.

Concentrating on larger farms with more than 10 non-family employees, NYCAMH has completed 75 on-farm consultations and 220 worker trainings, in English and Spanish, for 2,058 workers. NYCAMH on-farm consultants and trainers are located around the state to build resource capacity within local communities.

"The farms we have worked with have made great progress. On one farm workers requested safety glasses for the parlor, and on another they asked for respirators. Two things I never thought I would hear," Fiske said.

How to be ready for a LEP inspection

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ard chemical communication and animal handling. While OSHA does not require that such training be documented, it helps for you to do so as you will be able to keep track of who has been trained and who still needs the training.

There will be hazards that may need more extensive abatement. The best first step in this type of situation is to keep employees out of the areas where the hazards are present until adequate abatement can be implemented.

For issues such as horizontal bunk silos and confined spaces, you will need to review the worksite to identify the spaces and determine the hazards that they pose to workers. Then, train your employees on what those hazards are, where they exist and, most important, how they can protect themselves against those hazards. This is crucial to ensure that employees stay safe.

Once training is completed, post signage to alert employees of the hazard and to keep them out of the area of the hazard. Finally, develop engineering and work practice controls to ensure employees are no longer exposed to the hazard.

Remember, you don't have to go it alone, there are many resources to assist you.

Resources

The LEP has resources listed that you can access online: [http://](http://www.osha.gov/dep/leps/RegionII/reg2_fy2014_1403dairy.pdf)

Farm managers and owners are adapting quickly.

"One owner, while reviewing Material Safety Data Sheets found that a new footbath chemical required new uses of personal protective equipment (PPE)," he said.

The use of PPE such as glasses, gloves and respirators is becoming more commonplace and NYCAMH is trying to help fill the need by offering affordable, high quality equipment.

"We're unable to keep pto shields in stock because of the demands from dairy farms" said Melissa Horsman of NYCAMH.

Horsman is the voice you'll hear when ordering replacement shields or PPE from the catalog. Since January she has shipped over 300 replacement power take-off shields.

If respirators are required to be worn, OSHA will also require that workers be fit-tested before using them. NYCAMH, with all other Occupational Health Clinics in New York, offers respirator fit-testing. □

www.osha.gov/dep/leps/RegionII/reg2_fy2014_1403dairy.pdf.

You can attend a live outreach session that reviews the LEP or view it online at <https://www.farmcrediteast.com/>. For information on live outreach sessions, contact Ron Williams at (315)451-0808.

The New York State Department of Labor's Onsite Consultation Program will come to your farm upon your request and assist you in identifying and supplying suggestions on how to correct the hazards. This service is free and available upon request. To obtain this service, please contact them at:

Syracuse (315)479-3350

Buffalo (716)847-7166

Albany (518)457-2810.

Finally, you can also contact your local OSHA area office to get answers to questions you may have about the LEP or dairy farm hazards. The contact numbers are:

Syracuse (315)451-0808

Buffalo (716)551-3053

Albany (518)464-4338

The bottom line

Like you, we want all your workers to complete each workday healthy and whole. Knowledge, of hazards and corrective measures, is one of the most valuable tools you and your workers can carry with you each day. This LEP seeks to provide you with the knowledge and awareness to make your farms safer work environments for you and your employees. That's the bottom line.

And, if you have any questions, just ask us. □