



**FARM SAFETY ASSOCIATION INC.  
FACTSHEET  
MARCH, 2001**

## **DRESS UP FOR SAFETY**

### **Proper Clothing Can Reduce Risk of Farm Machinery Injury**

A loose shoelace; a few stray threads from a ragged old coat; long hair flowing out from under a cap.

These seem like minor things. Yet they can be – and have been – responsible for horrendous injury or death as a result of entanglement in operating farm machinery.

The Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP) found that entanglement in operating machinery was the leading circumstance associated with hospitalized farm injuries in Ontario. During CAISP's 1986 through 1995 study period, entanglement accounted for 858 hospitalizations – about 40 percent of the total.

Safety around farm equipment depends on knowledge of hazards. Armed with this information, alert machinery operators make a conscious effort to minimize and avoid accident risks.

Proper clothing plays a significant role in entanglement prevention. It is something that every operator needs to consider *before* starting work.

The principles behind “dressing up” for safety seem pretty obvious. Yet it is easy to fall into bad habits that increase accident risk. Consider the farmer who for months – or even years – has thrown on the same coat to go to the barn. Over time, the garment may develop a number of small rips. Perhaps some of the stitching has given way and left a pocket hanging loose. The chances of this coat becoming entangled in operating equipment have increased greatly, simply due to normal wear and tear.

Obviously, this ragged old coat should be retired from service. To make this decision, an individual has to be *aware* of the risk that the torn garment represents. You have to be conscious of the safety status of your work wear to make the right choice.

The following guidelines provide a basis for selecting appropriate attire to wear when working around farm machinery.

**Footwear** Steel-toed safety footwear is recommended. Boots should be properly and firmly tied at all times – dangling laces can easily become entangled in rotating machine parts. Use the correct length of lace for the boot or shoe, to minimize the amount of lace end hanging out from the knot.

Choose footwear with slip-resistant soles. A number of machine entanglements have occurred as a result of victims slipping and falling into operating equipment.

**Pants** should be close-fitting and comfortable. Avoid wide bell-bottoms or other designs that leave considerable material exposed for possible entanglement. Pants should be short enough that they don't drag on the ground.

Wear a belt or suspenders to keep pants up. A pair of pants that are constantly slipping off the hips are sure to be uncomfortable and will tend to “bag”, thereby presenting more material for potential entanglement.

**Shirts** should conform to the same criteria as pants. That is, they should be close-fitting and comfortable. Be on the lookout for tears or loose threads that could be caught by machinery parts.

Safety experts recommend buttoning the cuffs of long-sleeved shirts. Rolled-up sleeves are more easily caught by machinery.

**Coats and Jackets** should also be reasonably close-fitting, untornd, and free from loose threads. Many winter coats incorporate a number of drawstrings, dangling ribbons attached to zippers, etc. It's best to choose a coat that doesn't have these features. Machinery operators should remove drawstrings and any other items that invite entanglement. Also, keep coats and jackets zipped or buttoned up to reduce the entanglement risk.

Winter coats can catch on tractor gear shift levers or other controls. Take extra care to prevent this from happening when climbing down from machinery.

**Headwear** should protect against the elements and workplace hazards. Hard hats are recommended if there is danger from falling objects or overhead obstructions. They are definitely recommended for felling or trimming trees.

**Hair** Loose, long hair is quite vulnerable to entanglement in rotating shafts and other operating machine parts. Long hair should be well tied when working with machinery. Best bet is to keep it under your hat.

### **Personal Protective Gear**

While not so much a factor in entanglement prevention, a number of personal safety devices may be required to protect equipment operators. The nature of a particular job will dictate the need for the following personal protective items.

**Eye Protection** is very important when an operator is likely to be exposed to chemicals, dust, chaff, or flying particles. Safety glasses, goggles and face shields are available. Select the right protection for the type of hazards that are likely to be encountered.

**Hearing Protection** will be required if equipment doesn't have a sound proof cab. Acoustical earmuffs provide the most effective protection against noise. Many operators find them more comfortable than earplugs, which can also carry dirt into the ear canal.

**Hand Protection** If gloves are required, make sure they fit! Gloves that are too big are cumbersome when operating machinery. They can easily be caught by moving parts, which could result in amputation of a finger or hand.

**Respiratory Protection** A filter mask may be needed if the operator is exposed to a lot of dust and chaff. Chemical cartridge respirators should be worn when applying pesticides with an open tractor. Consult product labels and/or suppliers for detailed information about appropriate respiratory protection.

### **Think About What You'll be Wearing this Season**

To minimize potential for entanglement or other machinery-related accidents, it is crucial to know what the hazards are, and what steps need to be taken to avoid them.

Think about the clothes you wear when operating farm equipment. Are there items that should be replaced because of wear and tear? Are certain garments simply unsuitable for the job? Do certain items require modification to make them safe?

Following is a summary checklist of the safety wear recommendations presented in this fact sheet. This can be used to evaluate your own work wear, and to check that employees and family members are also properly dressed for safe equipment operation.

- Get rid of items that are baggy, torn or too long.
- Make it a habit to button up and zip up.
- Eliminate drawstrings and other dangling add-ons.
- Always wear slip-resistant safety footwear.
- Keep long hair tied up and under your hat.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment. Base your selection of protective devices on the hazards presented by the job, and by precautions printed on product labels.

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The information and recommendations contained in this publication are believed to be reliable and representative of contemporary expert opinion on the subject material. The Farm Safety Association does not guarantee absolute accuracy or sufficiency of subject material, nor can it accept responsibility for health and safety recommendations that may have been omitted due to particular and exceptional conditions and circumstances.