**Bonus Episode Harvest safety**

**Suggested rerecorded intro**

Hi, I’m Will Evans, and welcome again to Ahead Of The Field

You’re about to listen to another of our short bonus episodes and this one is about harvest safety, recorded with NFU Mutual farm specialist David Harrison prior to the Coronavirus lockdown coming into force. In the podcast, NFU Mutual Risk Management Services are mentioned. Typically, their health and safety experts would meet with you on your farm, to review health and safety and provide you with tailored advice and support.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, NFU Mutual Risk Management Services have launched a free health and safety service to help farming businesses protect themselves and their employees through the current situation.

To download resources or request a callback from a health and safety expert, search for ‘NFU Mutual Coronavirus Health and Safety’ or contact your local NFU Mutual agent.

We wish you a safe harvest during these unprecedented times.

**Originally recorded material**

Will: David, with harvest about to start in many parts of the countryside and farmers busy greasing combines and blowing up trailer tyres, are there any steps they should take to reduce the risk of accidents at this busy time?

David:Yeah, they definitely are Will. We would certainly advocate that you need to complete risk assessments to identify and manage hazards. And sadly, we're all aware of the poor safety record in farming. The latest HSE stats show that there were 39 fatalities in farming over the past year with a disproportionate number of over 60s losing their lives. So I would split it into three areas of focus. The first being the key one really, avoiding injury or death. Secondly, remaining legal. And thirdly, avoiding fires and breakdowns. So with regard to the first area, avoiding injury and death, it's always important to get the combine and other machinery items serviced and checked. So any guards and interlocks should be in place. PTO shafts functioning correctly with the right guarding and also checking brakes, tyres and lights to make sure that they are all serviced and operating correctly.

It's also important to ensure that all employees and contractors are aware of overhead power lines for the areas that they work in to avoid contact with those. Another key one is when working on Bailers or other implements, you must switch off the PTO and power down the tractor and take out the keys so that if you're trying to clear a blockage, the machine can't be switched on inadvertently. It's always a good idea to keep a mobile phone about your person rather than leaving it in the cab of the tractor so that if the worst should happen, you've got a means of raising the alarm. And it's really important to keep children out of machinery and well away from working areas.

Falls from height remain a major cause of death as well. So there's the need there to have a safe system of work when stuck in bails, checking grain elevators or doing other work at height. Last year, 14 people lost their lives on farms as a result of being struck by moving vehicles. So safe movements of vehicles around the farmyard, grain stores and the like is also clearly important. So there may be the need for clear signage there, use of high-vis vests and so on.

Will: And what about remaining legal?

David:Well, the HSE if got a really good leaflet which can be downloaded from their website called "What a Good Farm Looks Like" and some really practical information in there, pretty down to earth. Other things to do would be to check the licences and entitlements for employees, especially any casual labour you've got in over the summer. And there are quite a lot of rules and regulations around trailer weights, dimensions and speed limits. The legal rules there are quite complex. So it's worth taking advice to ensure that you do remain legal and safe. So an example would be for the likes of a JCB fast track. If you've got a big square baler attached to the back of it and then you end up having a reduced speed limit compared to the tractor on its own due to the width of that bailer. It's also worth considering the likes of Tilly your trailer that's TILLY - tilly your trailer, which is a check for safety on trailers to make sure that they are safe and legal.

Will You mentioned fires and breakdowns there. Perhaps you can just tell us a bit more about that.

David:Yeah, that's obviously a key area as well. It's massively inconvenient to have machinery downtime through fires and breakdowns so important there to regularly remove dust and chaff from combines, grain drives and the like and investigate any hot running engines or bearings at the first sign of any problems. It's also worth making sure that you've got fire extinguishers to hand, that they have been maintained, and that you and your workers know how to use them safely. When to sort of take a step back and call in the fire brigade.

Will: Do more accidents happen during harvest than other times of year?

David:Unfortunately. Yes, that is the case. There's time pressure with changing weather patterns. Contractors are often involved. You need to be in and out quickly and onto the next job. There's also time pressures to get combining and bailing finished and press on with autumn conservations. But it is just not worth cutting corners or trying to rush through.

Also, you've often got casual labour involved in harvest help. There may be people which are unfamiliar with machinery and unfamiliar with the locations they work in. So it's important that training is provided and documented and that you lead by example as well and dont' cut any corners yourself. It's also worth considering joining a pre harvest safety events often run by NFU Mutual in conjunction with the farming unions. We'd would also recommend speaking to your local nfu mutual agent with regards to NFU Mutual risk management services. And those are people that will be able to come out and actually see your farm in situ and advise on health and safety risks managing those exposures.

Will Okay. Thanks, David. In the meantime, if you've enjoyed this podcast, please do subscribe through your normal podcast app and that way you won't miss an episode. And whilst you're there, please do leave us a review as well.