Avoiding hazards associated with fending on a ranch, requires diligent use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

**Use the following PPE:**

* Gloves to protect against barbed wire, splinters, scratches etc.
* Non-snag outer clothing appropriate to the prevailing weather
* conditions.
* The use of high-visibility clothing may also be
* appropriate.
* Protective boots with good grip and ankle support.
* Eye protection is strongly advised because of the danger from flying debris, particularly when dismantling old fences.
* Wear protective clothing appropriate to power tools if they are being used.

Each person should carry a First Aid kit, including a large wound dressing. Hand-cleaning material such as waterless skin cleanser or soap, water and paper towels should also be available.

**Manual handling**

* Do not attempt to carry too much and adjust the load to suit the site conditions.
* Lift the power tool using the leg and arm muscles. Keep the back straight.
* Tools and equipment must be well maintained with all cutting edges adequately guarded when not in use.
* Do not place hand tools on the top of posts/stakes.
* Organize the delivery of fencing materials to minimize manual handling; use mechanized unloading or team work at a prepared site.
* Organize the layout of materials on the site to minimize carrying.

**Preparing to Work**

Check the proposed fence line for underground hazards and services, e.g., cables, water and gas mains. Where present, ensure they are clearly marked.

* Consult the local electricity company as required if working on fences with overhead power lines.
* When dismantling fences, check for vegetation growth that could make the behaviour of the wire and net unpredictable. Take particular care with old fences.
* Unload a trailer from the top side or the rear when it is on a side slope.

**Preservative-treated Timber**

* Wear chemical-resistant gloves to handle timber, which is still wet with preservative. (Dried preservative, or dried treated timber rewetted by rain is safe to handle.)
* If hand application of preservative has been used do not use treated timber until the preservative has completely dried (up to 2-3 weeks after treatment).
* Do not burn off-cuts of treated timber on site; dispose of them properly.
* If wood preservatives approved for hand application are used to treat cut surfaces, observe the safety instructions on the label for eye protection, gloves and overalls. Always use the least hazardous product.

**Manual post-driving tools**

* Do not support the post by hand - use a post holder.
* Do not test or adjust the post by hand while the driving tool is being used.
* Keep a firm stance with the feet and legs clear of the driving tool.
* When using a stake/post driver do not allow it to be lifted too high above the top of the post.
* When using a maul, ensure no one is close to or in line with the swing.

**Mechanical post/stake drivers**

* This is a one-person operation.
* If the post/stake driver is mounted to a tractor via a three-point linkage, the tractor must be large enough to remain stable during post/stake driving.
* The machine must be properly parked and braked before post/stake driving begins.
* There is a risk of flying debris from the driven post/stake. Suitable face protection should be worn.
* The post driver should be fitted with a gripping device to remove the need for the operator to hold the post during operation of the machine. Ropes or Y poles can be used to guide the post rather than a hand being placed anywhere upon the post.

**Barbed wire**

* Always wear protective gloves when handling barbed wire.
* When dispensing barbed wire keep it taut. Take care to avoid breakage and recoil, particularly with HT barbed wire.

**Guarding**

Effective guards must be used to prevent access to moving and other dangerous parts of the post driver while it is in operation by the operator. Additional means may be required to protect the operator from impact from particles ejected during the operation.

All drive belts, pulleys, chains, sprockets, and drive shafts must be fully guarded, including “back guarding” to prevent contact from behind. Chains and sprockets must be fully enclosed for their whole length.

**Post Driver Stability**

The post driver must remain stable during travel and use. The designer must specify the essential features that affect the post driver’s stability during use, in particular its weight.

There are numerous variables that can affect the stability of a post driver, which are outside the control of the designer and can only be determined by its user. These include the type of tractor to which the post driver is attached, the type of ground on which it is operating, the slope of the ground where it is being used or transported over, and the driven speed of the tractor.

The post driver should be designed so that it can be transported with the hammer in its lowered position. The design of the post driver should incorporate means for allowing the post driver to be stored in a stable position.

**Guiding the Post**

Except for those post drivers designed to operate on low speed for the purposes of positioning the post, post drivers should incorporate means to secure the post, or other item being driven, in the upright position. This is to avoid the operator or another person having to support and guide the post during the driving operation. Should this be required the use of ropes or a Y pole to position the post are most appropriate.

**Safety Signs**

Every post driver must clearly display, on the operator’s side and opposite side of the machine, pictorial and written signs or stickers warning against the serious safety risks.

**Safety Instruction**

The instruction of ranch workers operating a post driver should include as a minimum:

* the means for attaching and detaching the post driver to and from the tractor
* means for its safe storage and transport
* safe operating instructions
* a warning about overhead power lines and underground services
* necessary personal protective equipment
* details of the tractor’s specifications that are necessary for the safe operation and transport of the post driver, e.g., mass, width of wheel track, category of linkage
* details of the inspection and maintenance requirements for separate items and components, and the post driver as a whole, including a pre-operational checklist
* when the post driver is not in operation, it must be immobilized, that is turned off and the key removed from any power source

The owner, supervisor or manager must provide safety instructions to all persons operating the post driver to ensure it is used safely. The safety instructions should generally be the manufacturer’s instructions. Variations from the manufacturer’s instructions must be based on a risk assessment, must not remove any of the safety features, and must not expose persons to risks.

Prior to use, the post driver should be inspected to ensure it and all its safety features are functioning correctly, including guards. If any safety feature is not functioning correctly, the post driver must not be used.

The area where the post driver is to operate must be assessed for hazards that may affect the operation, including the location of overhead power lines and underground services, and the terrain where the post driver will be used. Safety considerations should include the understanding that overhead power line clearances allow for sagging of the power line due to their weight or wind.

The post driver must remain stable during travel and use and must not exceed the tractor manufacturer specifications. The tractor to which the post driver is attached must have sufficient lifting capacity to safely handle the post driver, both for transportation and operation.

**Personal Protective Equipment**

The ranch owner or supervisor must provide appropriate PPE to persons involved in the post driving operation. Hearing and eye protection must be provided.

**Deactivating the Post Driver**

When the post driver is not being used, it must be immobilized. Either the post driver (for self powered machines) or the power source (e.g., tractor) must be switched off and the activation switch immobilized or the key removed. When immobilized, the hammer must be placed in its lowest position.

All PTO shafts should be guarded

**Storage and Transport**

When not being used, the post driver must be safely stored in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Particular care should be given to ensure it is stable and does not pose a risk of falling onto a person who is preparing it for use or falling onto a person accidentally.

When attached to a tractor, the hammer should be in its lowest position. When travelling with a post driver across a farm or other work site, an assessment of the terrain should be made. Particular care is required to avoid contact with overhead power lines and travelling on sloping or uneven ground. Travel should be at reduced speed.