

# Preparing for SUMMER HELP



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**A**s we amble through what remains of winter, dealing with whatever that might look like, and muster up the energy for another calving season, thoughts begin to turn to the activities of spring and beyond. Part of this, for many in the ranching community, will involve the introduction of new workers to your site.

**The employment of a worker is serious business and AgSafe can help you with the preparation to ensure you do this right.** As you do that have you considered what that really entails? Have you thought through all the implications of the care and instruction of those workers? This is true for any employee whether that worker is a family member, a returning worker or a student. Those who will work for you during the summer, whether that is to move pipe, run a baler or move a cow, there are considerations of due diligence to address.

#### **The worker needs to receive an orientation to the site.**

This will include, but not be limited to, things like:

- How to obtain help if you are hurt?
- Where to go and what to do in case of an emergency?
- What is a confined space and where are they?
- What are the guidelines and policies at your ranch for working alone and checking in?

#### **The worker needs to be trained:**

- There needs to be some actual training for the worker in the task that they will perform.
- Equipment / tractor operators need to be informed on the unit they will operate.
- Implements and their function and operation must be explained
- Instruction needs to be provided for all tasks that you would require of a worker.

#### **The worker needs to demonstrate competency:**

- The tasks assigned to the worker need to be instructed and demonstrated by you. The worker then needs to be able to demonstrate to your satisfaction that they can safely and competently perform that task.

You get the point! This is only a snapshot of what you must do. This is not rocket science and when you look over the modified list I provided above, for the most part and in many ways, you do this. Would you not inform someone on how to operate this or that tractor? Not show them how to hook up and use an implement? Let them head off into the vast unknown not knowing where they are going or when they will return? Of course you do these things. The problem is a lack of system, a lack of documentation and a lack of grasping the reality of the day.

Remember the many times I have pointed out the basics of due diligence, “Doing all that you can to ensure the safety and wellbeing of a worker”, and the basics of what WorkSafeBC is looking for:

- A. What is the problem?
- B. What have you done about it?
- C. How can you prove it?

Believe it or not we are actually not bad at A & B, but we are pretty rough around the edges on C. And it is C that will help to determine the level of due diligence you undertook and provide your defense should anything ever occur involving a worker.

We live in the reality that this is a regulated world and industry. Once you take on an employee, and that includes people like woofers and exchange students, you are required to ensure their safety. When we take that reality, and make it “real” at your ranch, it can make sense. For instance, a new worker is going to be operating a tractor. You will walk them through that operation, you will tell them, show them and observe them. So, the part that you are missing is the documentation to establish that you did that. Rather than thinking as many do, that this safety stuff means you now must find time to run back to a binder and write stuff down, what if the telling, showing and watching were all recorded on a form that helps you with those things? Helps ensure you do not forget anything, that you covered it all uniformly for every worker while addressing C?

Integrating health and safety into the way you do business is what we strive to do with each rancher we work with and for. It makes way more sense when we think of it this way. If you had five pressing things to do, tend an injured cow, repair an irrigation line, pin down some flapping tin on a barn roof, get that new colt started and ensure your safety program is up to date.


I can tell you which order that all gets done in. I can also tell you that one of them keeps slipping to the bottom of the pile and rarely gets done unless directed by a WorkSafeBC officer. That is why the role of safety needs to be a part of the way you do business. A recognized and intentional piece of tending to that cow, repairing that irrigation, fixing that roof, and starting that colt. This does require a change in our culture, a change in our thinking. Don't be a slave to a binder. Make safety a part of what you do for yourself and your workers to stay alive. We can do this with you. It has been our goal. The team of people AgSafe has in the field has been doing this a long time. We've been through the big binders, the small programs, the "if big is good then bigger must be better" times over the last couple of decades. The experience in the field has helped us to work with you to create "doable" solutions. In working together, we are able to satisfy the all-important issues of due diligence, regulatory compliance, Certificate of Recognition achievability and make it doable. Does it require a change in attitude...? Yup. Does it require a change in thinking...? Yup. Does it require a change in culture...? Yup.

A producer recently asked me, "is this optional?" I responded ...yup...you can work with AgSafe or you can do it on your own..., doing it is not optional. He laughed, and we are working hard, making it easy and getting it done. AgSafe and the experienced team of realistic consultants afield in B.C. are here to help you and to effectively and efficiently incorporate safety into the way you do business...We are not regulators and we are not pushy. We will work with those who want to move forward or are directed by order to move forward.

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