

Checking Up on Tractor Safety

Statistics show that while the farming workforce only accounts for 1.2% of the UK's working population, farming accounts for 20% of all workplace fatalities. This equates to an average of more than 30 deaths and over 1000 serious injuries every year in the UK.

The most common cause of serious and fatal injuries in agriculture involves farm vehicles and machinery. To comply with legislation, you should carry out daily checks to make sure the machinery you are about to use, or allow someone else to use, is safe and working correctly.

The tractor is perhaps the farming industry's most valuable and versatile asset in terms of what it offers so keeping it safe and in good working order is often critical to productivity, with any downtime proving a costly inconvenience. A pre-use walk around of the tractor can reveal a great deal – if a mirror is damaged or lights are covered in mud, it doesn't take much to put right rather than ignoring the issue and putting others at risk around the farm or on the roads.

A quick inspection of the tractor before use can often identify potential faults before it's too late - perished tyres or under inflated tyres can increase the risk of the vehicle losing control and tipping over; whilst damaged hydraulics, hitch points and PTO shafts are often easily identified. With around 70% of fatalities being caused by crushing, the testing of handbrakes and interior instrumentation is a high priority on the list of equipment checks, especially if the driver is likely to be jumping in and out of the cab opening gates or to hitch/unhitch trailers.

Most tractors these days include operator manuals and a checklist to help with these inspections but finding a way to ensure the checks have been completed and to inform everyone when they've been completed is another problem entirely. Keeping a record of completed checklists can help show that a machine is well maintained and regularly checked, proving invaluable in the event of an HSE inspection following an accident. The checks may also help reduce the risk of an accident occurring in the first place, as possible defects can be highlighted and repairs carried out before they deteriorate further. Regular maintenance can also extend the lifespan of the machine and help prevent deterioration of parts, which inevitably lead to expensive repair bills.

Good to Go Safety developed an award winning system that has proven a simple but effective solution to equipment maintenance, proving extremely popular in the warehousing, logistics and construction industries. They have now turned their attention to agricultural equipment in attempt to encourage awareness of tractor safety within the industry.

A tag is attached at the entry point to the cab, or by the ignition box to help provide an immediate reminder to the operator before starting up the vehicle. The check book provides 25 individual checklists which are used to carry out a pre-use inspection with the findings (and date) placed inside the tag, and clearly visible for all to see. Duplicate copies of each inspection are also retained for maintenance/safety records.

As we all know, farming is not a 9-5 job. The working environment is ever changing, often encountering harsh conditions and long hours. As such it is tempting at times to think that spending 5 minutes to carry out a pre-use check is 5 minutes that could be better spent elsewhere. But when you read the opening statistics of this article you have to ask whether ignoring pre-use checks is ever really an option?

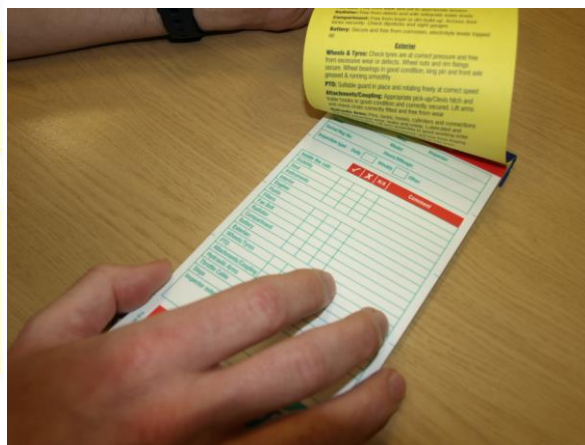
The Good to Go Safety systems are available to purchase at www.goodtogosafety.co.uk

If you would like to run this editorial please contact:

Graham Halliday

Product Manager at Good to Go Safety

Email: g.halliday@goodtogosafety.co.uk



WELL MAINTAINED FARMING EQUIPMENT CAN
SAVE THOUSANDS OF POUNDS AND LIVES.