

Farm Safety Week 2017

Day 6: Staying safe... and healthy – No Time to Lose



As in previous year's Farm Safety Weeks, IOSH Rural Industries Group (RIG) has extended the 5-day campaign into the weekend, to reflect farming being a '24/7' occupation.

On the 6th day we are drawing attention to the latest information and campaigns relating to health issues which are having a significant impact on many individuals, as well as the industry as a whole - yet not receiving the attention and resources put into safety issues.

The current 'headline' topics and latest sources of information and guidance selected from recent articles and events reported on the internet include **skin cancer**.

Research commissioned by IOSH for its No Time to Lose campaign, found that malignant melanoma kills nearly 50 people each year in Britain because of exposure to solar radiation at work, with 240 new cases being registered. Not surprisingly, agriculture is identified as one of the key sectors at risk.

IOSH has issued a Press Release 'Farmers risk of skin cancer highlighted in Farm Safety Week' drawing attention to an initiative in the South of England specifically encouraging people working on farms to do more to lessen their risk of skin cancer.

Further details are available via the IOSH website. This includes quotes from NHS England and **Kate Field** (IOSH Head of Information and Intelligence) who said:

"It's great to see the good work done by like-minded organisations to raise awareness of skin cancer caused by solar radiation exposure at work. "By working together, we can reach a wider audience to help beat occupational cancer caused by sun exposure.

As Kate has also pointed out: "Lung cancer caused by exposure to diesel fumes and silica dust at work is also preventable. Businesses can eliminate or minimise risks to workers by making simple changes to the way they work. Involving workers in these changes and training them on the risks will help make them successful. Monitoring levels of exposure and undertaking individual health surveillance ensures these changes are really protecting workers." "We have developed lots of free materials for businesses (including farmers and other outdoor workers), to help them identify the simple changes that can be made – they can all be found on the [No Time to Lose website](#).

"We are also encouraging businesses to sign up to the **IOSH No Time to Lose (NTTL)** campaign pledge to help tackle exposure at work by putting in place prevention strategies. A hundred businesses worldwide have now pledged to act to prevent occupational cancer. "

Alan Plom, RIG Vice Chair urges RIG Members to play their part by using their networks to raise awareness and encourage more companies to sign up and get free resources to help tackle sun exposure at work. Go to www.notimetolose.org.uk and to find out more

about how to protect yourself, your team or your clients from the effects of solar radiation, you can also visit www.nhs.uk and follow @NHSEnglandSouth on Twitter. You can also get regular updates on IOSH's No Time to Lose campaign by following @_NTTL on Twitter.

The excellent NTTL Information Packs include factsheets, pocket cards, posters, presentations and more - everything you need to engage and inform the workforce and also cover:

- **Diesel Fumes** – which in Britain is said to claim the lives of 650 people every year, with around 800 new cases registered annually
- **Silica Dust** - Most often associated with construction activities but obviously relevant to other sectors too, kills nearly 800 people a year in Britain.
- **Asbestos** – The biggest cause of occupational cancer, this will be the subject of the next phase of the NTTL campaign, being launched next year.

We are also reminded that free resources are available to support 'World Lung Cancer Day' (1 August).



Other work-related skin diseases can be caused or worsened by chemical exposure or prolonged, frequent contact with water (particularly with the addition of soap or detergents) and even sun exposure. Some products harm the skin and others are absorbed into the body through the skin. Common complaints include contact dermatitis (also known as eczema), folliculitis, acne and infective and mechanical skin disease.

These problems are common yet preventable through the 'APC' [Avoid / Protect / Check] approach:

- **Avoid** - direct skin contact by substitution of the substance or introduction of tools or equipment to keep a safe working distance. Protect - use PPE such as gloves, mild skin cleaning cream, pre-work creams, moisturisers and adequate welfare facilities.
- **Check** - for signs of itchy, dry or red skin (health surveillance) to ensure controls are adequate. Train staff in symptom identification and control measures.

And finally,

- **Mental Health** - The 'Unsaid Silent Killer'?

Alan Plom (RIG Vice Chair) comments: "Whilst Stress, Mental Health and Wellbeing are firmly on HSE's agenda, now it is not featured as a priority for the agriculture sector. However, this is likely to be addressed through intermediaries and organisations working to support farmers.



A recent **Farmers Weekly** article '**How staying healthy can secure your farming future**' (online 30 June 2017) reported on an interesting seminar on Mental Health and Wellbeing, held on 5 June. It urged farmers to ensure that they (themselves) are just as resilient as their businesses, especially as UK agriculture enters its most uncertain period for a generation.

Whilst many growers and livestock producers strive to ensure their businesses are fit for the future, experts say that those farmers best prepared for uncertainty are those who pay just as much attention to their own health and wellbeing.

This online article is for FW subscribers only, but there is a short report about the Farmers Health and Wellbeing Forum event on the [Worshipful Company of Farmers \(WCF\) website](#). This provides background information on the event and the wide range of industry support groups who was involved.

Attendees shared their experiences, discussed best practice and importantly, how best to create a much more 'joined up', nationwide approach to coping with what is rapidly becoming recognised as a major issue for farming - stress in the workplace.

A report and the conclusions of the meeting will be published in a 'Discussion Paper' and the WCF has agreed to produce a national list of resources, contacts and facilities. When completed, this will be made available to the industry via the [WCF website](#).

Alan adds: "The impact of stress, mental health and (the worst possible consequence) suicides, amongst farmers is an international problem. An interesting series of articles which have universal relevance have been published by 'Iowa Farmer Today':

1. Suicide by farmers continues to be a problem (30 June 2017)
2. All should be aware of indicators of farmer suicide (7 July 2017)
3. Prevention: People can take action to deal with possible farmer suicide (14 July 2017)
4. How government, industry can assist suicide prevention (21 July 2017)

Further information

Much of the information and many of the links to various other topics and sources of guidance on Occupational Health issues summarised in previous RIG News articles are still valid and useful, so worth another look:

- ['Fit for Farming' handbook](#) - This excellent 36-page A5 'health manual' - put together by the Yorkshire Rural Support Network - can be read on line or downloaded.
- Visit IOSH [NTTL campaign website](#) to find out more and to download or request relevant campaign materials. The free NTTL free resource packs contain factsheets, infographics, leaflets, posters, presentations, films and more - everything you need to engage and inform the workforce. Why not use them in Tool Box Talks?