

Farm Safety Week 2017

Day 7: Planning for emergencies – ‘Know your lines’, 105 and 112

Although **#FarmSafetyWeek** 2017 ended officially on Friday 28 July, IOSH Rural Industries Group (RIG) again extended this year’s campaign into the weekend, on the basis that farming is 24/7/365.

Following our ‘Day 6’ article on Saturday focusing on health issues (including the IOSH [No Time To Lose Campaign](#) and other useful sources of information and guidance, e.g. on schemes to help farming folk cope with stress and mental health problems), we have to be realistic and accept the fact that incidents will inevitably still happen - despite all the effort put into encouraging people to carry out effective risk assessments and adopt safe systems of work, guidance and training.

Our members also have an important part to play in helping to ensure that appropriate procedures and training are in place to enable businesses (and individuals) to respond to incidents effectively and have the essential knowledge and skills required to save lives - at a time when they are likely to be in a state of shock and panic. .

Few farms (if any?) rarely test their emergency procedures or practice rescue operations, e.g. from confined spaces, or contacts with overhead power lines? (NB: If you are aware of any that do, then please share examples of good practice and lessons learned with RIG, via networks@iosh.com).

Planning for Emergencies

In our 2015 Farm Safety Week ‘Day 7’ article ‘How to save a life in an emergency’ we covered the ‘basics’, including:

- Dealing with injuries
- What to do in an emergency
- Getting help
- Making sure all the necessary information is available to inform the Emergency Services, etc.

This article is still valid and a useful reminder. It also contains links to relevant guidance, so please take time to read it (again).



In addition, a key element in any Emergency Plan is knowing exactly where you are working. This simple idea - a laminated map Grid Reference card - was spotted recently on Twitter. It lists the key locations on the farm, and can be attached to quad bikes, tractors and any other machines or vehicles working remotely, away from the farm yard. The Emergency Services can then be better informed and save time getting to the location of any incident - those vital minutes which can make the difference between life and death.

Mobile Phones

The advice is:

- Remember to keep your mobile phones charged and within easy reach, ie. in a pocket and not left in a vehicle, so you will be able to summon help if needed.
- If you are working alone, don't forget to tell someone where you are working, and when you are due back - this simple system helps people work out if you have encountered a problem and potentially saves lives.
- Don't forget 'No Signal - No problem': Text 112 - It is also worth reminding our members - and you reminding your staff or clients - about this useful alternative to 999 and potentially life-saving facility to enable quick contact with the Emergency Services, even when there is no mobile phone signal.
- Your mobile will connect to any network, even if your mobile network has no coverage in that area, and even with pay-as-you-go phones that have no credit on them.
- However, it is necessary to pre-register each mobile phone for the 112 Emergency SMS text service (done simply by texting 'register' (NB: All letters must be in lower case) to 999, then replying 'yes' when asked to confirm).

We strongly recommend anyone travelling or working remotely should watch the excellent short film ['Help Me - the secrets of using 112 on a mobile phone in an emergency/accident'](#). This describes how to improve your mobile phone reception as well as the process to register a mobile phone number for the 112 SMS service.

A pdf 'Information Sheet' Emergency Procedures - Calling the Emergency Services and using 112 SMS Emergency texts is also available on the industry resources page.

NB: RIG Members: We would like to hear of any stories where this has been used - please share via networks@iosh.com.

'Know your Lines' (Overhead Power Lines)

The traditional harvest season warnings have been widely issued, as lots of machinery which can potentially contact overhead power lines (OHPLs) are now at work in the fields. Care (and planning!) is needed to ensure that telehandler booms, tipping trailers, open combine grain tank lids, vegetable harvester and sugar beet conveyors, etc, don't meet overhead power lines - some of which may only be **5.2m from the ground**.

The high number of contacts with OHPLs on farms reported each year emphasises that this ever-present hazard must be an essential part of any farms 'Emergency Plan'. Last year, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) recorded more than 100 incidents involving farm machinery in its central southern England area alone, cutting off local electricity supplies and having the potential to cause serious injury, or worse, to those involved. Fortunately, none of these incidents led to injury, although elsewhere around the country, 3 people lost their lives and others were seriously injured on farms after vehicles contacted power lines.

This led to a joint SSEN/NFU campaign 'Look Up, Look Out' being launched during this year's Farm Safety Week. This [NFU article](#) provides information about the campaign and links to guidance and a short film featuring Hampshire NFU chairman **Matt Culley**, an arable farmer and contractor, explaining his approach.



Matt Culley said: "We work in a high-risk industry, but there are simple steps we can all take to help avoid accidents around electrical equipment, especially during harvest. Risk assessments ahead of the working day, using machinery around poles and under the overhead lines during daylight hours so there's clearer visibility, and taking the time to 'Look up, look out' can all help reduce the chances of accident or injury to ourselves and our workers."

Craig Gilroy, (SSEN's Director of Customer Operations in England), explained more: "Our rural landscape changes all the time and the 'Look up, Look out' message encourages anyone working in the field to take stock of their surroundings and the overhead lines that may run across or into the land. Trees and hedgerows may have grown since the last time you checked and now obscure the nearby lines; intense heat in the summer can cause lines to sag slightly and working with different styles or heights of machinery may bring you closer to the lines than in previous years."

"We've joined forces with the NFU to raise awareness and to highlight this safety message during Farm Safety Week, and this is just the start of what, we hope, will be an enduring partnership to help the farming communities in our network area stay accident-free throughout the seasons."

UK Power Networks (UKPN - which owns and maintains the electricity network in London and the South East, and in East Anglia) is also [promoting safe working practices](#) near power lines and reminding people that a life can be lost or terrible life-changing injuries inflicted within seconds if you come into contact with electricity. UK Power Networks is asking farmers and agricultural workers to be vigilant when working out in the fields, and their safety experts are visiting country fairs and shows to reinforce the safety message.

UKPN emphasised that working long days, the warm weather and time pressures during harvest can lead to tiredness and distraction. This is when accidents can happen. Like SSEN, UK Power Networks is urging farmers and all workers on farms to follow these simple safety steps and be aware of the correct procedures in the event of a vehicle meeting an OHPL - before starting work:

1. **Plan ahead** - identify and mark all power lines on your farm map.
2. **'Look up, Look out'** – always check for overhead power lines and be extra careful when harvesting, ploughing, using irrigation pipes and ladders.
3. **Always check** when loading or unloading vehicles, using tipper wagons or trailers in fields or stacking materials.
4. **Know the height** of machinery and trailers that will be in use near lines and ensure there's plenty of clearance – remember that electricity can 'jump' if an object comes near enough.
5. **Inform** visitors, contractors or casual workers where electricity cables and lines are.
6. **Stay in your cab** or vehicle if you do come in to contact with an overhead line or cable; lower any raised parts in contact with the line or try to drive the machine clear, if you can, and try to avoid touching anything metal within it.
7. **In an emergency call 105** to inform the Network Operator and get them to disconnect the supply immediately. [NB. 105 is the new UK-wide single emergency number for power companies and can be used no matter who you actually buy your electricity from. It replaced the 6 different Network company 0800 numbers from September 2016 and is the quickest way to put you through to the correct network operator. Put it in your phones now!]
8. **Avoid touching any part of the vehicle** if you have to get out, because it is too dangerous to stay put, i.e. if the machinery is affected by fire, then it's advised that you "leap out of the vehicle as high and as far as you can." [NB. Take very large steps, with only one foot contacting the ground at a time. An alternative method advocated to get safely to a safe distance if you do have to jump out, is to 'bunny-hop' away (i.e. with both feet together) – Either of these methods avoid the current flowing up your legs and through your body, with potentially fatal effect.]
9. **Remember the 5 metre rule** – If someone is in trouble, keep at least 5m away and never try to resuscitate someone unless they are at least 5m away from the electrical source.
10. **Never assume the line is dead** - particularly fallen or broken wires, as a circuit may be switched back on automatically at any time (auto-reclosed). Never touch an OHPL that has been brought down by machinery, or has fallen, e.g. in a storm or try to disentangle equipment, until you have received confirmation that the line has been de-energised and made safe.

Why not use these '10 Golden Rules' as a **Tool Box Talk**. To help reinforce these 'rules', free vehicle safety stickers are available from www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/internet/en/safety/ or from other local Distributors.

Further guidance on [safe deliveries to farms](#) (which includes assessing hazards from OHPLs) and a '**Safety Focus**' leaflet on [electricity](#) can be found on the **Farm Safety Partnership** website. **HSE's guidance** on safety with [electricity](#) can be found on their Agriculture webpages, including general advice on avoiding contact and what to do if you hit [OHPLs](#) and Agriculture Information Sheet [AIS 8](#) 'Working safely near overhead electricity power lines'.

The **Energy Networks Association (ENA)** has also produced a leaflet: [guidance on safety for farmers & agricultural contractors](#). Similar guidance is available from the [Northern Ireland Electricity Networks](#) which includes a link to relevant guidance from HSENI, e.g. [precautions during silage making](#).

You are all urged to read and download the excellent and more detailed (28 page) '[Guidelines for safe working near overhead electricity lines in Agriculture](#)' published by the HSA. This compiles in one document useful advice regarding construction activities near OHPLs; use of irrigators and slurry spreaders, etc; fencing; stacks and temporary



structures; OHPL Maps, Safety Checklists and contact details for the ESB Networks in the Republic of Ireland.

The HSA's Guidelines also includes a recommendation to fit OHPL **'Proximity Detectors'** and advises that "suppliers of agricultural machinery (reaching heights greater than 5 metres either occasionally or continuously) should consider offering the option of fitting overhead line proximity detectors on machinery, given that machinery of this nature has the potential to make contact with overhead power lines".

RIG OHPL Workshop proposed

However, the use, reliability and effectiveness of OHPL **'Proximity Detectors'** is still a matter of debate in some quarters, and this is another topic that RIG hopes to explore in a Workshop on 'Safe Working Near OHPLs' in cooperation with the ENA on behalf of the Farm Safety Partnership.

[NB: If you have any contacts who could help us with this, please contact RIG's Events Coordinator Alan Plom, via networks@iosh.com

Training & Lone Workers

Many of the 'Survivor's Stories' from the 5 nations taking part in **#FarmSafetyWeek 2017** and featured in our articles highlighted the importance of training. These incidents also reiterate the value of establishing a **'Lone Worker'** policy - as emphasised in our #FarmSafetyWeek 'Day 7' article in 2016.

This article also highlighted the **Forestry Industry Safety Accord (FISA)** leaflet [FISA 802 Emergency Planning](#) . You can download this leaflet (free) and use it as a Tool Box Talk, as it provides useful advice relevant for any work activity in remote locations - not just forestry.

RIG are still considering an article (and possibly a webinar) to share ideas and good practice on 'Lone Working', so if you have any suggestions and/or would like to help us organise it, please contact networks@iosh.com.

In last year's **'Day 7' article** we also highlighted guidance from a range of international sources to help develop Farm Safety Plans and create a 'Farm Safety Kit' – including 'hazard maps', informing contractors, videos highlighting the importance of wearing seat belts on tractors and the effects of fatigue in causing accidents, etc.

Another useful source of information about recent incidents and guidance is the **Farm Safety Partnership's** website. We urge you all to regularly log on to read the monthly ['Timely Reminders'](#) and 'blogs' posted by the NFU – again these are a useful basis for Tool Box Talks and updating staff, to help **keep the impetus of #FarmSafetyWeek going all year round – 24/7/365!**

What next?

If you do nothing else, remember and promote awareness (and use) of the **2 Emergency Phone numbers: 105 and 112. They could save a life – possibly your own.**

Also look out for our final 'review' article, looking back over **#FarmSafetyWeek 2017** to see what we have learned, and looking forward to the future.