

Agriculture-related safety training

This fact sheet summarizes some, but not all, training required by Minnesota OSHA (MNOSHA)s for employees in agricultural settings.

Introduction

This fact sheet describes OSHA safety training requirements which may apply to individual agricultural operations throughout the University system. Additional training requirements may apply based on tasks performed.

Federal Hazard Communication (HazComm) and Minnesota Employee Right to Know Act (MERTKA)

These two regulations apply to employers whose employees are exposed or potentially exposed to hazardous substances, harmful physical agents (such as heat, noise, ionizing radiation, or non-ionizing radiation), or infectious agents.

While there are certain exceptions in these regulations for farms, they rarely apply to University farms, at least not to any significant extent.

HazComm and MERTKA require all covered employees to receive training on general topics such as chemical labeling, Safety Data Sheets, etc. In addition, employees must receive training on the specific hazards to which they are exposed. Training must focus on hazard recognition and exposure prevention.

In agricultural settings, these hazards may include (but are not limited to) pesticides, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, methane, diesel exhaust, fuels, heat, noise, insect bites, poisonous plants, etc.

Haz. Comm. and MERTKA training is required at the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter. Training must be properly documented.

Grain Handling

The grain handling regulation applies where employees work in a grain handling facility, such as grain elevators, feed mills, flour mills, rice mills, etc.

Training must cover general safety precautions including the recognition and prevention of hazards related to dust accumulations and ignition sources. Employees must also receive instruction on specific procedures and safety practices such as equipment cleaning, clearing choked legs, etc.

Employees who perform specialized tasks such as grain bin entry require additional training.

Grain handling training is required at the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter. Training must be properly documented.

Bobcat/Skid Steer Training

Employees who operate skid steers or bobcats must have training that complies with OSHA requirements for powered industrial trucks. These requirements are found at 29 CFR 1910.178(l).

Training must cover maintenance and use of fork trucks, tractors, platform lift trucks, motorized hand trucks, and other specialized industrial trucks powered by electric motors or internal combustion engines.

Training must also include safe operation of the skid steer, such as, safety features, load capacities, controls/instrumentation, and include guidance on how to operate the equipment within the workplace and a review of the applicable portions of the OSHA regulation.

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Bobcat/Skid steer training is required at the time of initial assignment. There is no specific requirement for annual refresher training, but the operator's performance must be evaluated at least every three years. Retraining is required whenever the operator's performance indicates a need for retraining - for example, if he or she is involved in an accident, or is observed operating in an unsafe manner. Retraining is also required when there is a significant change in the type of units to be operated, or in the workplace environment.

Agricultural Tractor and Farm Equipment

Any employee who operates an agricultural tractor or similar equipment must receive training on tractor safety. At a minimum, the training must include the information included in 29 CFR 1928 Subpart C App A - Employee operating instruction.

Training includes operation on slopes, speed, seat belts, hitch points, etc. The training must also include any other relevant safety information and precautions dictated by the work at hand.

Agricultural tractor and farm equipment training is required at the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter. Training must be properly documented.

Machine guarding farm field equipment and farmstead equipment

This regulation applies to all operations where employees work with farm field or farmstead equipment.

Each covered employee must receive instruction on the safe operation and servicing of all applicable equipment. Training on guarding farm field equipment and farmstead equipment is required at the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter. Training must be properly documented.

Field Sanitation

This regulation applies to any agricultural establishment where 11 or more employees are engaged in hand-labor operations in the field on any given day.

Employees must be trained on the importance of good hygiene practices, including but not limited to proper hydration, hand washing, proper sanitation, etc.

Training should be provided at time of initial assignment, and as deemed necessary by the managing department.

Pesticides

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is intended to protect employees in agricultural settings from the hazards of pesticides. WPS has specific training requirements for both pesticide workers (those that work around agricultural pesticides) and pesticide handlers.

WPS training must be approved by EPA and is required initially, before potential exposure and annually.

Additional information is available in the UHS Guidance Document 'Worker Protection Standard' and online at <http://pesticideresources.org/wps/>

Additionally, in Minnesota all persons purchasing and applying Restricted Use pesticides must be certified and licensed in the State of Minnesota. Licensing information can be found at www.mds.state.mn.us.

Questions

If you have questions on this topic, please contact University Health and Safety at (612) 626-6002.