

Farm Safety Tip – Hay Harvest Safety

Harvesting hay can be very dangerous: A 61-year-old catches his sweatshirt in a hay baler and is killed. A 43-year-old farmer catches his arm in the PTO of a self-unloading wagon. The amputated arm cannot be reattached because it is mangled too badly. A 57-year-old man dies of internal injuries when caught in a hay baler. A 50-year-old is crushed to death by a load of hay that topples from a farm wagon as a flat tire is being changed. An 18-year-old falls into the beaters of a self-unloading wagon. Almost two hours go by before the victim is found.

Fatigue increases stress levels and encourages us to take dangerous shortcuts. Often, a break in the weather for getting the hay down, dried and baled is way too small – but it has to be done. The window for getting the best quality hay may be very narrow. You are tempted to push, push, push to beat the weather, the weevil or the wilt. Many serious injuries and deaths occur on farms at just such a time.

Remember, no crop, no matter how large or valuable, is worth an unnecessary injury or death. Careless operation that saves time but endangers workers is foolish. Slow down and use some common sense.

Here are some tips to be safe at harvest time:

#1 Read the operator's manual (again). Haying equipment is used only during the summer, giving you nearly a year to forget the safety warnings.

#2 Keep yourself alert during harvest season: Drink plenty of liquids, eat regular meals, get enough sleep, take breaks.

#3 Make sure all guards and shields are in place on all your harvesting equipment.

#4 NEVER try to unplug the baler until you have disengaged the power take-off, shut off the tractor engine, and put the ignition key in your pocket.

#5 For conventional balers, remember the flywheel keeps the machine operating for a considerable time after power is disengaged. Never work on a baler until the fly wheel has completely stopped.

#6 For round balers, Make sure twine is properly threaded and the twine arm is adjusted and in good working condition. Do not feed twine by hand into the baler.

#7 With forage wagons, stay clear of the discharge conveyor while operating. Remain in the tractor seat.

#8 With cutting equipment, never try to adjust cutter bars, reels, or conditioning rollers without disengaging the power. Avoid rushed movements when working close to the equipment, even when stationary, because of its sharp edges and points.

For more information on harvesting hay safely, see
<http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmlpubs/farmseries/2349.htm>

For more information on large round bale safety, see
<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/ageng/442-455/442-455.html>

For more information on how to safely unclog cutterbars, reels, crimper rolls and augers, see page two of this pdf document:
<http://www.uidaho.edu/bae/agsafety/frmsaf07.pdf>

