Determining the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for your farm

The following information is provided by Nationwide®, your approved insurance and financial services company.

Farm machinery, chemicals, stored manure and livestock are just a few injury or illness hazards on farms and ranches. The right personal protective equipment (PPE) helps minimize exposure and the risk these types of hazards pose to health and safety.

"I remind myself and others to stop and think about the hazards of every job we do on the farm, then think about PPE that might protect you," said Nationwide Risk Management Consultant, farmer and agronomy specialist Derek Hommer.

Identifying hazards and risks
Think about these types of hazards in assessing what poses you the greatest physical risk on your farm or ranch:

- **Chemical.** Pesticides, fertilizer, stored manure and cleaning products can generate toxic fumes. Read and follow any product labels and follow any PPE guidelines. Likely PPE includes chemical-resistant gloves, eye protection, long pants and long-sleeved shirts, face coverings, aprons, closed-toe shoes and respirators.
- **Physical.** Safety goggles, ear protection, welding aprons/chaps, leather gloves and steel-toed boots all help prevent injuries when working with power tools and farm machinery that create physical injury risk.
- **Biological.** Exposure to bacteria, viruses or parasites from animals, manure, water or grain can cause serious illnesses. Wearing PPE like nitrile gloves and face coverings (surgical, N95 or full-face respirators) can help minimize risk of infection and illness.
- **Environmental.** Extreme temperatures, high noise levels and UV rays can lead to long-term adverse health effects. Match PPE to the specific environmental hazards you face, like sunscreen when working in direct sunlight. Be aware of temperature extremes, dress appropriately and work in teams so workers can monitor one another for heat- or cold-related illness.

Confined spaces
Confined spaces on the farm like manure pits and grain bins pose specific hazards. Most farms host a variety of confined spaces including grain bins, silos, manure pits, culverts, water tanks, tanker trucks and more. Confined spaces are often oxygen-deficient environments where self-rescue can be very difficult.

"Entering a confined space on the farm is serious business. You owe it to yourself to learn how to enter safely," Hommer said. "This this includes air monitoring, lock out/tag out, spotters, rescue harnesses and wearing the correct PPE."

PPE maintenance and farm worker training
Maintenance of PPE is important to making sure it's effective in protecting you from potential hazards. Here are some key steps in maintaining PPE:

- Inspect your PPE before and after each use. Replace it if you notice any damage.
- Follow all rules on safe respirator use and maintenance. Pay attention to fit testing, serviceable life periods, inspection and cleaning. Use the correct respirator/cartridges.

- Clean your PPE according to manufacturer's instructions. Certain chemicals and dirt can degrade PPE material and reduce its effectiveness.
- Store PPE in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and extreme temperatures. Improper storage can lead to degradation and reduce PPE's lifespan.
- Replace PPE at regular intervals depending on use or as suggested by the manufacturer.

Finally, provide PPE use and maintenance training for all farm workers. Post clear signage reminding workers to use PPE in areas where hazards are present.

Visit AgInsightCenter.com for more resources and expert tips to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

Nationwide, the Nationwide N and Eagle, and Nationwide is on your side are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. © 2023 Nationwide