

Farm improvement scheme

The new Farm Improvement Scheme will provide grant-aid for a wide range of on-farm investments over the next seven years. Launched in July by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mary Coughlan TD, it will encompass schemes such as the Dairy Hygiene Scheme, and grand aid of up to €120,000 will be available under the new scheme. Under the Scheme, grant-aid will be available up to a maximum eligible investment ceiling of €120,000 with a separate ceiling of €120,000 being applicable in the case of dairy hygiene measures. The standard grant-rate will be 40 per cent for animal housing and related storage facilities and for dairy hygiene investments, with a 10 per cent top-up grant being available for eligible young farmers in certain cases. The maximum eligible investment ceiling of €120,000 for dairy hygiene investments is substantially higher

than the previous €50,000 investment ceiling which was applicable under the old Dairy Hygiene Scheme. The Minister also increased investment ceilings of €40,000 for milking machines and €25,000 for bulk milk tanks compared to the €16,000 investment ceilings applicable in each case under the Dairy Hygiene Scheme. The Minister stated that she was particularly pleased that all income ceilings have been removed from the Scheme so that all farmers can participate in the Scheme. She was also pleased to confirm that the five-year restriction on access to top-up grants by young farmers has been removed so that all eligible farmers under the age of 35 will be able to benefit from these additional grants.

The new scheme will also extend to a number of additional items including (a) out-wintering pads, (b) meal bins and

silos, (c) mats on slats, cubicle beds and internal concrete areas, (d) mobile sheep handling facilities, (e) calf-feeding systems and (f) slurry separators.

Minister Coughlan acknowledged the support of the Minister for Finance in providing the funding for this important scheme, the monies for which are set out in the published Rural Development Programme.

An amount of €85m has been set-aside for the Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings and the measures will be terminated when those monies have been allocated. Expenditure of this level will by then have had a very positive effect on the development of farming infrastructure in Ireland, especially when taken in the context of the wide range and extent of other funding being channelled into farming throughout the period of the programme.

Building investment reduces labour input on beef farm

Co Offaly farmers Sean and Maureen Healion found the investment in a new slatted beef unit provided them with an alternative to rented accommodation and cut the labour input on their farm.

The Healion are a good example of progressive beef producers. Sean and Maureen farm with the help of their two sons, Brian and Donal, on their modern livestock and tillage farm at Spollinstown near Tullamore in Co Offaly.

They decided to invest in a new shed to help with their suckler herd of 100 Limousin x Charolais cows and the commercial beef enterprise.

After deliberating the family invested in a new slatted beef unit (34x 23m) with a Profile 6R fibre cement roof supplied by Tegral Building Products Ltd in Athy. This 14-bay shed holds around 300 cattle depending on age etc.

According to Sean the cattle are very clean, content and they've experienced no problems with lice or pneumonia as there had when previously renting buildings with metal roofs.

Keeping cattle long term in rented accommodation is not a good idea, says Sean, and now with the new shed herding and feeding times have been reduced. It now only takes half an hour to feed cattle and another half hour for herding on the farm.

The commercial stock are fed a total mixed ration (TMR) of citrus pulp, barley, wheat, wholecrop, grass and maize silage plus minerals and vitamins, with all cereals home grown on the farm with 50 per cent of maize is grown under cover for early growth and harvesting.

The cattle are mainly sold to Excell Meats in Kilbeggan – now owned by Kepak – and while Sean and Maureen are happy with



their investment in the new shed, they're not as impressed with the price their finished cattle are making!

Building plans

John O'Hanlon, their local Teagasc drystock and tillage adviser for 20 years, did the building plans and Sean couldn't fault the service he received from Teagasc. He also very much appreciates the help he received from the Department of Agriculture officials in the Tullamore office. "The availability of grant assistance made it an easy decision for us to proceed with the investment," Sean said. Mick Ryan of Evergreen Ltd, Mount Bolus did all the steel and roofing work, while the concrete work was done by Jim Delaney of Lynrea Ltd, Clonaslee who has a pedigree herd of Limousin so he appreciates the importance of good housing.

"The roof is guaranteed for 30 years and has an anticipated life span of 50-plus years," says Michel O'Kelly of Tegral.



"There is little or no maintenance with fibre cement and no dripping from the purlins so the roof is always nice and dry." The Profile 6R sheeting protects the roof from corrosion, rot or rust and can absorb 30 per cent of its own weight in moisture - definitely an advantage with our weather conditions.

Profile 6R sheeting significantly reduces the noise from the drumming of rain so that workers and stock enjoy a much quieter atmosphere. With all these advantages and a competitive price no wonder farmers are choosing Tegral when it comes to selecting the best roof available for their cattle sheds.

The new building has space sheeting in the roof and vented cladding on the side walls. A gap under the roof overhang also improves the ventilation. Building commenced in September and cattle were in by December 1, 2006, so the family are very happy with the builders. Cattle are cleaner, content and there is a huge saving in labour, according to Sean.

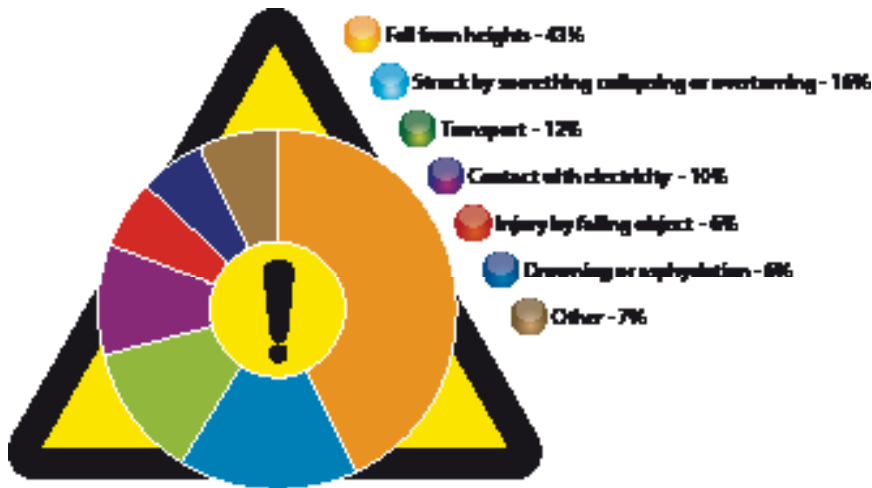


Figure 1: Breakdown of the main causes of fatalities in the construction industry:

Farm building safety a practical approach

John McNamara
Health and Safety Officer, Teagasc

Building construction along with farming are ranked as the two most hazardous work sectors in Ireland and internationally. In 2007, a massive programme of building on farms, estimated to cost €948 million, is planned. This places the spotlight firmly on completing this work safely. In order to assist all parties involved in farm buildings to build in safety, Teagasc and FBD Trust in association with the Health and Safety Authority, Irish Farm Buildings Association, Irish Farm Buildings Contractors Association and the Irish Concrete Association have prepared an illustrated booklet entitled 'Build in Safety - An Advisory Booklet for Farmers'. This publication is intended to advise all parties involved in farm building construction of both legal duties and practical approaches necessary to construct farm building safely.

The booklet will be circulated widely to increase awareness of safety and health legislation and implementation at a practical level in relation to farm building construction.

Building construction fatalities

A review of fatal accidents in the construction indicates that the majority of deaths occur due to falls from heights or being struck by an object or vehicle collapsing or overturning (59 per cent). Other frequent causes are transport related (12 per cent), contact with electricity (10 per cent), injury due to a falling object (6 per cent) and drowning or asphyxiation (six per cent). This data must place a safety focus strongly on situations causing these accidents. Also, as 46 per cent of construction deaths take place on sites with less than five employees, a focus must be put on the systems of control on small scale building sites, such as farms.

Accident prevention strategies

The so called 'Three-E Method' of accident prevention involving Engineering (implementation of physical controls), Education and Enforcement (internally within organisation or externally) has had success in industrial settings internationally but not in agriculture (Murphy, 1992). The reason for this disparity according to Murphy was that a greater level of control exists in the industrial workplaces than on farms. Thus approaches to applying the Three - E Method and gaining control of safety and health is the issue that needs to be addressed in a practical way in farm building construction. The following gives pointers as to how this can be achieved.

Engineering

Engineering refers, generally, to implementing physical controls which either eliminate or reduce the level of hazardous work undertaken. This is

Many farmers will be looking to improve their farm buildings under the new Farm Improvement Scheme.



the best approach to adopt as it removes or reduces the hazard and makes the work inherently safer. The following are examples of where 'engineering' can be used in the management of safety in farm building construction.

- Using mechanical means of lifting loads together with systems of checking and certification of lifting equipment.
- Provision of access platforms/scaffolding for working at heights.
- Provision of electrical safety devices such as residual current devices (30mA) and 110 volt transformers.
- Use of secure fencing to prevent access to the site.
- A well organised site improves access and reduces the risk of slips, trips and falls.

Education

Education refers to approaches to ensure that all persons involved in a construction project have the knowledge necessary to carry out their role in relation to the building work undertaken. The booklet

'Build in Safety - An Advisory Booklet for Farmers' provides a considerable amount of information related to the roles of persons involved in a farm building construction. The following points are particularly relevant to 'education';

- The farmer (client) and building contractor should have strong and positive communications regarding their respective roles regarding safety during the construction project.
- The Project Supervisor for the Design Process (PSDP) and the Project Supervisor for the Construction Stage (PSCS) must have adequate training, knowledge, experience and resources to carry out their roles.
- Persons carrying out work should have appropriate training. The introduction of mandatory 'Safe Pass' and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) training has had a huge impact on the level of safety and health knowledge available throughout the construction industry.

Enforcement

Enforcement refers to ensuring that safety and health standards and practices are actually implemented. Enforcement can be internal or external to a business. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation puts the primary responsibility for ensuring that legislative measures are implemented on those who are in charge of workplaces.

The legislation therefore strongly emphasises adequate supervision.

Key issues regarding supervision are as follows:

- Supervisors must know and implement their roles. A maxim in management is that 'you will get the standards that you look for'. Set low standards and you will certainly get them!
- Never ignore an unsafe action. This is a warning sign for the future!
- Good communications among all parties involved in a farm building project is a vital component in securing safety in a farm building project.

The role of a Health and Safety Authority Inspector on an Inspection visit to a workplace is to check if a system of managing safety and health is in place and that it is being satisfactorily implemented. If non-compliance with the legislation is identified, the inspector would take enforcement action such as issuing an 'Improvement' or 'Prohibition' notice. Following an accident, if a HSA investigation reveals that all legally required measures were not complied with, then prosecution can take place. However, it must be emphasised that safety, health and welfare legislation is aimed at ensuring that accidents and ill health are prevented to the fullest extent possible.

Benefits of well-designed farm buildings

Having well-designed farm buildings and farmyard layouts is a huge long-term resource to farmers in terms of safety, labour efficiency and quality of life.

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Legal and insurance issues of farm building construction work

As more and more farmers upgrade their farm buildings the legal and insurance aspects of construction work cannot be avoided, according to Ciaran Roche FBD Safety and Risk Management Surveyor.

Farm building construction work is very dangerous, therefore of this it is essential that Farmers and Contractors construct buildings in a safe manner. Serious accidents always lead to heart ache and pain, but it can also lead to criminal prosecution and financial ruin. This is why it is imperative that you construct farm buildings in a safely manner, comply with the law and ensure that you have adequate insurance in place to protect yourself from financial hardship and to give yourself peace of mind.

The Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations, 2006 & 2001 were put in place to help create a safer place to work for all persons involved in construction work. The regulations impose legal duties on Clients (Farmers), Designers, Project Supervisors and Contractors and outline General and Specific Health and Safety Provisions. The key duties of Clients (Farmers), Designers, Project Supervisors and Contractors under the Design and Management sections of the Construction Regulations.

Client duties

You are a client if you are a person (including a company) for whom construction work is being carried out for the purpose of a trade or business or other

undertaking.

As a client you must, for every project:

- Appoint, in writing, a project supervisor for the design process (PSDP) and a project supervisor for the construction stage (PSCS) who have adequate training, knowledge, experience and resources;
- Be satisfied that each designer and contractor appointed has adequate training, knowledge, experience and resources for the work to be performed;
- Co-operate with the project supervisor and supply necessary information;
- Retain and make available the Safety File for the completed structure. The Safety File contains information on the completed structure that will be required for future maintenance or renovation work, and;
- Notify the Authority of the appointment of the PSDP where construction is likely to take more than 500 person days or 30 working days.

Project Supervisor for the Design Process (PSDP) Duties

A competent PSDP must be appointed, in writing, by the client for each project. In many cases the PSDP is a designer who has the necessary competence to fulfil the

role of PSDP. As the PSDP your key role is to ensure co-ordination of the work of designers throughout the project.

As a PSDP you must:

- Identify hazards arising from the design or from the technical, organisational, planning or time related aspects of the project and where possible, eliminate these hazards or reduce the risk;
- Communicate necessary control measure, design assumptions or remaining risks to the Project Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS) so they can be dealt with in the Safety and Health Plan;
- Prepare a written safety and health plan for any project where construction will take more than 500 person days or 30 working days or there is a Particular Risk and deliver it to the client prior to tender, and;
- Prepare a safety file for the completed structure and give it to the client.

Project Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS) Duties

A competent PSCS must be appointed, in writing, by the client for each project. In many cases the Contractor will assume the role of PSCS but in some cases Farmers

themselves will adopt the role of Managing the Construction Project and may take on the role and responsibility's of the Project Supervisor Construction Stage. In such instances it is vital that they carry out the duties attaching to this role.

As a PSCS you must:

- Co-ordinate the construction of the project;
- Be involved in the identification of hazards, their elimination and the reduction of risks during construction;
- Develop the Safety and Health Plan initially prepared by the PSDP before construction commences;
- Co-ordinate the implementation of the construction regulations by Contractors;
- Organise co-operation between the Contractors and the provision of information;
- Co-ordinate the checking of safe working procedures;
- Co-ordinate measures to restrict entry on to the site;
- Co-ordinate arrangements to ensure that craft, general construction workers and security workers have a Safety Awareness card, e.g. Safe Pass and a Construction Skills card where required, and;
- Monitor the compliance of Contractors and others and take corrective action where necessary.

Duties of Contractors

You are a Contractor if you are an employer whose employees carry out or manage construction work. Local Authorities, manufacturers and self employed persons may also be "Contractors" under these regulations. The Contractor has significant duties relating to a wide range of issues. Some of these duties are summarised below.

As a Contractor you must:

- Co-operate with and comply with directions of the PSCS;
- Provide a copy of your safety statement and relevant information to the PSCS;
- Comply with site rules and the safety and health plan and ensure that your employees comply, and;
- Identify hazards, eliminate the hazards or reduce risks during construction.

Safe Pass Cards and Construction Skills Certification Scheme Cards
Schedule 3 and 4 of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations, 2006, requires all construction workers to have a valid Safe Pass Card. The Safe Pass Card can be obtained by attending a one day training course aimed at promoting safety awareness and basic safety principles amongst all construction workers.

All construction workers undertaking

the tasks listed in the Fourth Schedule of the Construction Regulations, 2006 must have been issued with a FETAC award under the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and be in possession of CSCS registration cards.

Schedule 4 requires all construction workers engaged in the specialist activities listed below must have Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Cards (or their equivalent as recognised by FAS). The CSCS Card can be obtained by successful completion of CSCS training approved by FAS, a registration card will be issued, bearing the name and logo of FAS, the registration number, the name and photo of holder.

- Scaffolding - basic;
- Scaffolding - advanced;
- Mobile tower scaffold - where the employee has not been trained in basic or advanced scaffold
- Tower crane operation;
- Self erecting tower crane operation - where the employee has not been trained in tower crane operation
- Slinging/Signaling;
- Telescopic handler operation;
- Tractor/dozer operation;
- Mobile crane operation;
- Crawler crane operation;
- Articulated dumper operation;
- Site dumper operation;



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- (m) 1800 excavator operation;
- (n) Mini-digger operation - where the employee has not been trained in the operation of a 1800 excavator digger
- (o) 3600 excavator operation;
- (p) Roof and wall cladding/sheeting;
- (q) Built-up roof felting;
- (r) Signing, lighting and guarding on roads;
- (s) Locating under-ground services;
- (t) Shot firing;

Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Work at Height) Regulations, 2006

These regulations came into force on 21st June 2006 and bring together all the then existing requirements on work at height into one goal based set of regulations. These regulations set out the basic principles for safe work at height for all sectors of employment and provide a fundamental framework for safe working at height, based on risk assessment, applicable to the wide range of work activities carried out at height.

Work at height means working in a place (except a staircase in a permanent workplace) where a person could be injured by falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level.

Examples: Working on trestles; working on a flat roof; working on a ladder or stepladder; working at ground level adjacent to an excavation; working on formwork within an excavation; work at heights is the main cause of fatal and serious accidents on construction sites. Some 43 per cent of construction fatalities are caused by falls from heights and six per cent are caused by persons being hit by falling objects. The main factors that contribute to falls from heights:

- Failure to identify where employees may be at risk;
- Failure to provide safe access to and from the place of work;
- Failure to provide safe systems of work;
- Failure to ensure that safe systems of work are followed;
- Failure to provide adequate information, instruction, training or supervision;
- Failure to use appropriate equipment, and;
- Failure to provide safe plant/equipment.

The Regulations are based on a risk assessment approach and they require that in selecting the most appropriate work equipment for a particular activity that the selection process takes into account the hierarchy of controls. Avoid work at height where this is reasonably practicable. Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where you cannot avoid working at height. Where you cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall.

The Regulations also require employers and the self employed to ensure that:

- All work at height is properly planned, organised, supervised and carried out safely;
- The place where work at height is done is safe;
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions;
- Those involved in work at height are instructed and trained;
- Equipment for work at height is carefully selected and appropriately inspected;
- Give collective protection measures (e.g. guard rails) priority over personal protection measures (e.g. safety harnesses);
- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled;
- Injury from falling objects is prevented, and;
- Employees are kept clear of 'Danger Areas'.

Work at heights

Every precaution must be taken to ensure all work at height is adequately planned and carried out in a safe manner. When selecting the most appropriate work equipment for a particular activity the selection process must take into account the hierarchy of controls:

- Firstly to avoid work at height where possible;
- Then to prevent falls from height; and, failing that:
- To reduce the consequences of a fall.

Work at heights must never be carried out in icy, rainy or windy conditions. Roof workers need the appropriate knowledge, skill and experience to work safely, or be under the supervision of someone else who has it. They need to be able to recognise the risk, understand the appropriate system of work and be competent in the skills to carry out such work as; installing and wearing harness systems; installing safety nets; installing edge protection; operating a mobile access platform.

Scaffolding/working platforms

Scaffold platforms should where possible be used as working

platforms for all work at height but in particular for all work where there is a high risk of falling or serious injury from a fall. The scaffold must be designed, planned and subsequently erected by fully trained personnel, in accordance with all relevant legislation, codes of practice, and manufacturer's instructions. Scaffolds should include dedicated ladder access bays, properly constructed loading bays and be certified. All working platforms must be adequate and secure. In many cases the roof itself will provide this (where the slope is less than 10 degrees and a risk assessment allows it). Edge protection should be used to prevent falls from heights and it must be ensured that the protection of adequate strength to stop someone who is rolling or sliding off a roof. When working on existing fragile roofs extra precautions must be taken such as the use of crawler boards.

Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWP)

Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (e.g. Boom Hoists & Scissors Lifts) can also be used for carrying out work at heights. Only competent and trained operators should be allowed control the movement of mobile elevated platforms and they must wear a safety harness.

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If it is not possible or reasonable practicable to provide an adequate working platform with proper edge protection then a safety harness and or safety net, beanbag, or airbag arrangement will be required. The height for safe use of a harness restraint system should be checked with the manufacturers data before use to ensure that they can be used safely for the work at hand. A safety harness only protects the worker during a fall. If a person becomes suspended in the harness a new risk arises called 'suspension trauma'. Suspension trauma can lead to unconsciousness after 10 minutes because the blood collects in the legs and may result in death in less than 30 minutes unless the person is rescued. Any use of a harness must be complemented by an emergency rescue procedure that can rescue the person from the harness within the above timeframe. The use of a harness must be considered with reference to the working at heights regulations.

Note: Safety harnesses and personal fall - arrest equipment is not a substitute for safe working platforms or collective protection such as safety nets.

Ladder access

Getting on and off the roof is a major risk. A secure means of entry and exit is

essential. A properly secured ladder is a minimum. The ladder must extend at least 1m above the landing or platform area that it is used for access.

Ladder safety

In general ladders should only be used for accessing areas at heights and not for doing work at height. Ladders must only be used for work at height if your risk assessment has demonstrated that the use of more suitable work equipment is not justified because of

- (a) the short duration of use and minimum risk or
- (b) existing features on site prohibit the use of other types of access equipment e.g. M.E.W.P.

All ladders should be of sound construction and maintained in good condition.

Ladders must be securely held in place and placed at a safe angle (e.g. 1m out from the building for every 4m in height). Platform or podium ladders are a safe alternative to ladders for carrying working at height.

Insurance

It is vital that appropriate Insurances are arranged to provide you with protection against any legal liability you may have in the event of an accident on your construction site to any person, whether they be direct employees, employees of contractors, delivery persons to your site or indeed members of the Public.

Remember just because you may employ Contractors to do a job, who have their own Insurances, their Insurances may not protect your legal Liability if you are drawn into a claim arising from an accident for which you as a Farmer may be deemed responsible or partially responsible for:

Outbuildings constructed by a single contractor

A farmer must:

- Request the Contractor to confirm in writing that they are performing the role and responsibilities of Projects Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS) as defined in the Construction

Regulations 2006;

- Request and retain details of Insurances for Contractors engaged and check such insurances for: public Liability covers with Limits of Indemnity of no less than €2.6 million; employers' Liability covers with Limit of Indemnity of no less than €13 million; an Indemnity to Principals Clause under both Employers' and Public Liability.

Polices should not contain restrictive clauses such as:

- Hot works exclusion (particularly relevant for steel and fitting out aspects)
- Height and/or depth limits of less than 10m in height and 5m in depth.

Outbuildings constructed by direct labour/multiple contractors

Outbuildings constructed in this manner expose Farmers to more significant Potential Legal liability in the event of a claim arising from accidents on site and therefore need Farmers to take a more active role in ensuring that a safe site is maintained and safe systems of work are employed.

Farmers must appoint a competent Project Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS), in writing, for each project. In some cases farmers themselves will adopt the role of Managing and Co-ordinating the construction project and take on the role and responsibility's of the PSCS. In such instances it is vital that they carry out the duties attaching to this role.

The PSCS must:

Complete the Questionnaire in the 'Build in Safety' booklet as this will help you identify important health and safety issues that need to be addressed during the construction project.

Check all workers and contractors engaged are experienced and competent in the works they are participating in and have 'Safe Pass' and CSCS cards as appropriate. Develop a Health and Safety Plan and prepare a Risk Assessment and Method Statement for the project. Farmers must also request and retain details of Insurances for Contractors engaged and check such insurances for:

- Public Liability covers with Limits of Indemnity of no less than €2.6 million;
- Employers' Liability covers with Limit of Indemnity of no less than €13 million, and;
- An Indemnity to Principals Clause under both Employers' and Public Liability.

Polices should not contain restrictive clauses such as:

- Hot works exclusion (particularly relevant for steel and fitting out aspects)
- Height and/or depth limits of less than 10m in height and 5m in depth.

At all times contact your own Insurer to ensure that appropriate Cover is in place or arranged for your Construction Project. More detailed information on health and safety issues is available at www.hsa.ie

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