



March 2009

FARMER WARNS FELLOW WORKERS TO WAKE UP TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

A farmer is calling on his own industry to stop turning a blind eye to health and safety, in a bid to reduce the number of deaths and injuries suffered by thousands of farm workers every year.


Stephen Lawson, who is also secretary of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said current figures* show a farmer is killed almost every week, and thousands more are putting their lives on the line by ignoring the importance of health and safety.

“As a lawyer and a farmer, I see both sides of the fence,” he said. “I see the devastation which follows an injury or death to a worker, and I also know that many tragedies can be avoided if proper attention is given to health and safety.”

Stephen says the farming industry has a culture of dangerous risk-taking as many workers are resistant to regulation and red tape, and safety is not generally regarded as integral to good farm management.

“I firmly believe that health and safety does not have to be onerous – it’s about sensible precautions and common sense,” said Stephen. “As the majority of firms are family run, workers are often shown how to do the job by the previous generation so it’s important that training and safety practices are updated and maintained through the generations.”

“As a farmer, the last thing I want to do is lecture other farmers,” he said, “but I feel very strongly that something has to be done to reduce the number of deaths and injuries within our industry. It’s our responsibility not to bury our heads in the sand and ignore health and safety – we need to start creating safer workplaces for ourselves, our families and our employees.”



Stephen says simple measures can save lives, and he is calling on the industry to follow three steps to better safety:

- Let someone know where you are going and how long you are likely to be away - it's important someone knows where to find you if you are unable to get back
- Make sure all farm workers have at least basic first aid training – it could save a life
- Have a good communication system in place so that if you need help you can ask for it - keep in contact through a mobile phone or walkie talkie

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Note to editors:

- For more information, contact Lisa Wardle, t: 01159388715, or Michael Johns, t: 0115 9388702
- *Statistics taken from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
Link: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/hsagriculture.htm>