

# Hay bale safety

Staying safe during the busy hay harvest season takes planning. Having all-hands-on deck, timing operations with the weather, and keeping equipment up and running are just some things to manage. With all these demands, it's easy to see why preventing injuries and keeping everyone safe is an important part of every hay season.

## Takeaways

- Make sure all hay equipment has been properly serviced and conduct daily checks, including blowing out hay chaff to prevent fire hazards.
- Plan the flow of traffic during harvest and stacking operations, and share the plan with everyone.
- When transporting hay on trailers, use straps to secure loads properly.
- Plan your stacking site: make sure the surface is level, that there are no overhead electrical lines that hay stacking equipment can reach, and that bracing structures are ready.
- Protect yourself by wearing sunscreen, sunglasses, pants, long-sleeve shirt, sturdy shoes, and gloves.
- Make sure you have plenty of food and water for the day. Staying hydrated and taking breaks as needed throughout the day can prevent serious injury.
- Review your fire prevention plan and safety expectations in the event of an equipment, field, or haystack fire.

## Real injury examples

A worker was using a tractor to load hay on a truck and the truck driver stepped out to watch. The tractor driver removed a bale and created an imbalance in the stack, causing a 1,000-pound bale to fall. The truck driver was standing too close and the bale fell on top of him. The driver survived but underwent months of recovery from multiple broken bones. *What can we learn from this story?*

A farmer was using an open-cab tractor to move bales at the end of a long day. The tractor hadn't been serviced recently and a leak in the hydraulic hose caused a loss of power to the loader. The loader arm failed, causing a 1,000-pound bale to fall backwards, crushing the farmer who was in the cab. Caught between the bale and the tractor, the farmer was not found for several hours. He was permanently paralyzed as a result of this event. *How could this situation have been prevented?*

While playing on top of a haystack, a farmer's son fell through a gap in the stack. The boy was trapped for hours before someone finally heard him yelling. Because there was only one opening to the barn where the stack was stored, it took rescuers nearly an hour to safely move enough bales to get to him. The boy was scared, but fortunately had no physical injuries. *Who has access to your haystacks? What can you do to keep animals and people away from your stacks?*



## Take action (Complete one or more activities as a team)

- PLAN: Before starting harvest, inspect your hay storage sites and make sure they are level, that there are no overhead powerlines within 10 feet of your stack equipment, and that bracing poles or structures are available if needed.
- SHARE: Many people have a story of a near miss, accident, or safety concern from past seasons or other work experiences. Ask employees to share a story and what changes they made afterward.
- CHECK: Before beginning harvest or hay-stacking operations, check all haying equipment for maintenance issues and missing guards. Make sure fire extinguishers have been serviced and are in working order. Stock trauma and first-aid kits and place them where they can be used when needed. Let all employees know where emergency response equipment is kept.

## Safety talk sign-in sheet

Record your attendees for compliance.

Leader's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of training: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTENDEE NAME (Print)

ATTENDEE SIGNATURE

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### More info

For additional information and resources related to hay safety, check out SAIF's hay safety guide. ([www.saif.com/S1199](http://www.saif.com/S1199))