



Five to thrive Supporting rural communities



Supporting Rural Communities

Agrii and FCN are committed to supporting the rural areas in which we work. For more information about how FCN can support farming families affected by a farm related accident or experiencing isolation and loneliness, please contact **FCN helpline** on **03000 111 999** or use our **e-Helpline: help@fcn.org.uk**

USEFUL LINKS...

HSE Lone Working Guidelines
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm

NFU Lone Working on Farms Guidelines
www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/farm-business/farm-safety/farm-safety-news/lone-working/

Agrii

@AgriiUK

www.agrii.co.uk

FCN THE FARMING
COMMUNITY
NETWORK
Here for you

@FCNcharity

/TheFarmingCommunityNetwork

www.fcn.org.uk



Lone Working and Isolation

Farming can be a very isolating and lonely occupation, with many farm workers spending long hours alone and working in remote situations, with and alongside machinery and livestock. Lone working in agriculture is common place, and while many can value and thrive in lone working environments, it can bring with it increased risk.

Suicide rates in farming are also amongst the highest of any occupational group. Lone working can exacerbate feelings of hopelessness when things are not going well, contributing to the onset of depression. Equally, those already experiencing wellbeing issues can be at increased risk of having accidents, especially when working alone.

Implementing some simple practices on your farm may well serve to protect you and your workforce.

Farming remains one of our country's most hazardous industries, accounting for 1.5% of workers but 15-20% of all worker fatalities. This can have a devastating impact on both the farming family and the farm business.

What is lone working?

The Health and Safety Executive guidance INDG173 Working Alone defines lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.

Many farms, through choice or by necessity, do not employ staff and farmers have no choice but to work alone. However even on farms where there is a relatively large team employed, there are times when farm workers are required to carry out tasks alone and often remotely.

Is lone working legal?

It is not against the law to work alone or to ask a member of staff to work alone. However, the law requires employers to consider and address any health and safety risks and put reasonable measures into place to ensure tasks can be carried out safely.

If you are responsible for a farm business, you are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees and/or family members, including contractors and self-employed people undertaking work for you. You must consider and address any health and safety risks and put the necessary measures in place to ensure the safety of your workers.

Workers also have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves, those around them and to adhere to any practices and measures that have been put into place by their employer.

Law and Best Practice:

As part of your legal responsibility as an employer, you must:

- + Involve employees when identifying risk and considering safety measures.
- + Where possible, ensure steps are taken to remove risk or put measures in to place to minimise risk such as safety equipment, training and assessment of skills.
- + Continue to review risk assessments and adapt where there is a change in work practise, equipment or situation.
- + If you have more than five employees, it is a legal requirement to document risk assessments.

IT IS BEST PRACTICE TO ALSO CONSIDER:

- + If a task is unsafe to be carried out by a lone worker and provide help where required.
- + Bringing safety measures to the attention of visiting contractors or workers and making other employers aware of measures where lone workers are working away from your farm.

4 positive steps to reduce risk

1. KNOW THE RISK

Continue to review the risk assessment, particularly where there have been changes. Consider and implement the agreed safety measures and assess the level of skill. Implementing correct incident reporting procedures. Make visiting third parties aware of hazards.

2. STAY CONNECTED

Consider if mobile phones will have a signal and utilise alternative forms of communication if necessary such as two way radios.

3. PLAN AHEAD

Make people aware of your plans, what tasks you will be undertaking and check in regularly at an agreed time.

4. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Know the action steps if things go wrong and ensure instruction and training in proper procedures is provided to staff members. Who to ring. Who is first aid trained. Provide first aid kits and self-first aid training and awareness.

4 ways to combat isolation and loneliness

1. TALK

Isolation can turn to loneliness – loneliness can in turn lead to mental wellbeing issues. Encourage staff members to talk about any concerns they may have. Communicate regularly, share ideas and take breaks together. Stay in touch with neighbouring farmers.

2. ENCOURAGE DOWNTIME

Take time to enjoy activities with family and friends, sporting activities and clubs. Be part of your local community.

3. AVOID ASSUMPTION

Be open about expectations, encourage staff to ask for training or to ask for help when a task requires support. Involve team members when measuring risk and agreeing best practice. Ask your neighbour "how are things really?"

4. RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

If someone opens up to you, give that person time and respect. Don't pass on information unnecessarily and communicate your thoughts and plans for change going forward.

What support is available from FCN?

FCN provides **FREE**, confidential practical and pastoral support to farmers and families within the farming community. Many of the 400+ FCN volunteers are or have been involved directly in farming and therefore have a great understanding of the issues farmers and farming families regularly face.

FCN volunteers can help farmers and their families become more independent, resilient and better able to face the challenges that farming can bring.

Their national helpline is open every day of the year from 7am-11pm, and all cases that come to FCN are treated confidentially and non-judgementally.