



# West Texas A&M University™

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

### STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

**SOP No. 24.01.01.W1.25AR Agriculture Safety Procedure**

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Environmental Health and Safety at WTAMU is composed of three distinct but integrated environmental safety departments that report to the Vice President of Research and Compliance. Academic and Research Environmental Health and Safety (AR-EHS) is responsible for research and academic related compliance, which includes laboratory and academic research and the associated compliance committees. Fire and Life Safety (FLS-EHS) is responsible for fire related compliance and conducts fire and life safety inspections of campus buildings and assists with the testing of all fire detection and suppression systems. General Safety (GHS-EHS) promotes safe work and health practices, to all faculty, staff, students, and visitors. Examples of General Health and Safety components include: office safety, proper lifting techniques, and trip and fall prevention.

Supplements [TAMUS Regulation 24.01.01](#)

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## 1. Purpose

The following information is provided to assist WTAMU departments in developing procedures to meet agriculture safety requirements to protect students, employees, and the environment. This program sets forth recommended minimum requirements that need to be followed to maximize the safety of all workers.

## 2. Scope

This procedure applies to any student, employee, instructor, researcher, or visitor that will be conducting agriculture research or any agriculture activity at WTAMU or any of its constituencies.

## 3. Pesticide Chemical Safety

This section discusses agriculture chemical safety for pesticides, including rodenticide, insecticides, herbicides, etc. Pesticides are chemicals that protect crop and livestock from rodents, insects, disease, or weeds. They also control pests that endanger human health. Because pesticides are poisonous, they can be extremely dangerous to humans. Before applying commercial pesticides, always ensure your safety, the safety of others, and the safety of the environment.

There are several government agencies that govern the use of commercial pesticides. For more information on pesticide usage, contact one or more of the following groups: Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Department of Health, Structural Pest Control Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

### 3.1 General Pesticide Safety

The following sections provide general or specific guidelines for handling pesticides. To help reduce the hazards associated with pesticides:

- Do not transport, mix, or use agricultural chemicals unless you can summon help, if needed.
- Keep an ample supply of water nearby to flush exposed areas if a spill occurs.
- Check all pesticide equipment before use to ensure proper working condition.
- Read pesticide labels carefully. Follow the label directions when mixing, applying, storing, or disposing of pesticides.
- Wear personal protective equipment to prevent dermal, inhalation, and mucous membrane exposure.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke when handling pesticides.
- Launder clothing and bathe after working with pesticides to ensure that all chemicals are removed from clothing and skin.
- Do not use agricultural pesticides around the home or office.
- Observe assigned re-entry intervals. Always wear the appropriate protective clothing when entering fields before the re-entry date.

- Always handle pesticides downhill from wells, cisterns, sinkholes, ditches, or standing water.
- Do not apply pesticides when rain is eminent or if wind could affect the spraying area.
- Triple-rinse spray equipment and empty containers. Apply the rinse water to the treated field.
- Properly dispose of empty containers.

### 3.2 Preparing to Apply Pesticides

Preparation is essential for chemical safety. Follow these steps to properly prepare for pesticide application:

- **Plan Ahead** - Always read chemical labels before attempting to work with pesticides. Prepare for a possible emergency by maintaining a personal decontamination site, a chemical spill kit, and by knowing the proper first aid procedures associated with your pesticide.
- **Move Pesticides Safely** - Careless chemical transportation can cause spills and contamination. Do not carry pesticides in an enclosed area, such as a car. Be sure to secure the pesticides to prevent shifting or bouncing. In addition, never leave your vehicle unattended when transporting chemicals.
- **Select Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - Regardless of the pesticide's toxicity, always wear a long-sleeve shirt and pants when working with pesticides. Wear additional PPE, as necessary.
- **Select Application Equipment** - Choose suitable equipment to properly apply pesticides. Before using the equipment, inspect it for good working order.
- **Provide Prior Notification** - Before applying pesticides, inform all people in or around the application area. Notification allows people to protect themselves from harmful chemicals.

### 3.3 Mixing Pesticides

Always read and carefully follow label directions when mixing pesticides. Even if you are familiar with a particular chemical, re-read the label to ensure that you have the latest safety information. In addition, follow these guidelines for mixing pesticides:

- **Wear Personal Protective Equipment** - Always wear PPE when handling hazardous chemicals.
- **Work in a Safe Area** - The pesticide mixing and loading area should be well ventilated, well lit, and downhill from any water sources. Concrete slabs are ideal for mixing chemicals since they allow for easy cleanup.
- **Measure Chemicals Correctly** - Measure and mix pesticides carefully. Never mix different pesticides except as directed by the label or chemical manufacturer. Do not use more chemical than prescribed by the pesticide label. The overuse of pesticides is illegal, and may result in the following:
  - Higher pest control costs
  - Pesticide residue in food
  - Groundwater pollution
  - Pesticide resistance
- **Pour Pesticides Carefully** - Always wear a face shield and take care not to splash chemicals when pouring pesticides. Never use your mouth to siphon pesticides.

### 3.4 Applying Pesticides

When you apply pesticides, you are responsible for protecting yourself, other people, and the environment. Follow these guidelines when applying pesticides:

- **Minimize Exposure** - Even mildly toxic chemicals can harm you if you use them daily. Take care to minimize your exposure to any chemical. Avoid working in pesticide spray, mist, or runoff. Always work with another person when working with hazardous chemicals.
- **Avoid Applying Pesticides in Sensitive Areas** - Avoid spraying pesticides near beehives or areas that humans normally occupy (e.g., schools, playgrounds, hospitals, etc.) If you must apply pesticides in sensitive areas, do so when the weather is calm and when people are not around.
- **Avoid Pesticide Drift, Runoff, and Spills** - Pesticides that fall outside the targeted application area can be very hazardous. Choose weather conditions, equipment, and chemicals that do not lend themselves to these hazards.
- **Avoid Equipment Accidents** - Equipment accidents are often caused by poor maintenance and improper work habits. Avoid equipment accidents by following all operating instructions.

### 3.5 Pesticide Storage and Disposal

Always try to use all the pesticide in your application tank. If pesticides remain, use them on other target locations. After emptying the tank, clean and store the equipment. The following summary of EPA storage criteria should be followed for pesticides labeled with the signal words DANGER, POISON, or WARNING or the skull and crossbones symbol. These procedures and criteria are not necessary for the storage of pesticides classed as less toxic (CAUTION word on the label) or for those registered for use in the home or garden.

#### 3.5.1 **Site Storage**

- Locate where flooding is unlikely.
- Locate where runoff will not contaminate any water system.

#### 3.5.2 **Storage Facility**

- Dry, well ventilated, separate room, building, or covered area with fire protection (e.g., dry chemical fire extinguisher).
- Secured by fence and /or locked doors. Signs on rooms/buildings to provide hazard warning (e.g., DANGER POISON, PESTICIDE STORAGE).
- Movable pesticide equipment is labeled as contaminated and not removed from the site until decontaminated.
- Provisions are available for the decontamination of personnel and equipment, contaminated water disposed of as excess pesticide, and contaminated runoff collected and treated as excess pesticide.

### 3.5.3 Operational Procedures

- Store pesticide containers in rows with the labels plainly visible.
- Place contents from damaged containers in sound containers.
- If relevant, segregate pesticides by formulation.
- Store rigid containers in an upright position, with tight lids/bungs, off the ground in a manner to permit access and inspection.
- Maintain a complete inventory indicating the number and identity of containers.
- Check containers regularly for corrosion and leaks.
- Keep suitable absorbent (e.g., vermiculite) on hand in case of spills.

### 3.5.4 Safety Precautions

- Inspect pesticide containers for leaks before handling them.
- Do not allow unauthorized personnel in the storage area.
- Do not store pesticides next to items intended for consumption by animals or humans.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, or chew tobacco where pesticides are present.
- Do not store beverages, food, eating utensils, or smoking material in the storage or loading areas.
- Wear rubber gloves while handling containers of pesticides.
- Wash hands immediately after handling pesticides. Remove contaminated protective clothing immediately; extra sets of clean clothing should be nearby.

### 3.5.5 Fire Control

- Where large quantities are stored, inform the fire department.
- Provide the fire chief with home telephone numbers of responsible person(s).

### 3.5.6 Disposal

- Unused or outdated pesticides must be disposed of as hazardous chemicals.
- See chapter 14, Hazardous Waste Disposal, in the WTAMU Safety Manual for more information.

**IMPORTANT:** *Never leave pesticide containers at a field site. Be sure to account for every container used, and safely dispose of empty containers.*

**NOTE:** *Store herbicides separately from other pesticides. Some herbicides may volatilize and contaminate the pesticides.*

## 3.6 Pesticide Cleanup

Always thoroughly clean all pesticide equipment as soon as you are through with it. Leaving pesticide

residue in mixing, loading, or application equipment can result in accidental injury, death to livestock or people, and/or unwanted contamination of plants or soils. Clean the inside and outside of pesticide equipment, including nozzles. Dispose of contaminated rinse water as directed on the chemical label.

**IMPORTANT:** *Do not allow pesticide rinse water to contaminate water supplies.*

### 3.7 Antidotes

Time is of the essence when pesticide overexposure occurs. However, using an antidote kit may not be the best course of action. Unless a physician has stated that an antidote is needed, it should not be administered. Some antidotes, such as atropine, can be poisonous if misused. A prescription may even be necessary to acquire the antidote. You may be able to get a local physician to write the prescription, prepare a written protocol regarding the use of the antidote, and train pertinent employees about how and when to administer the antidote. If medical assistance is available locally through a hospital, physician, or ambulance service, you should call 911 or take the individual directly to the nearest emergency treatment center instead of maintaining an antidote kit on site.

## 4. Fertilizer Chemical Safety

Ammonia fertilizers are widely used because of their effectiveness in getting large amounts of nitrogen into the soil. Anhydrous ammonia fertilizer is essentially dry ammonia gas compressed into liquid form. This material is very harmful if accidentally spilled or sprayed onto body surfaces. It can cause blindness if it gets into the eyes. Also, high concentrations of ammonia gas in the air are very irritating to the lungs. Always use appropriate PPE and exercise rigorous care when handling, applying, and storing such toxic or irritating material.

### 4.1 Safety Precautions

Most ammonia fertilizer accidents occur when the material is being transferred from one tank to another. One of the major causes of accidents is hoses coming loose or bursting. Exercise care in the handling and use of ammonia fertilizer by doing the following:

- Always wear chemical goggles and adequate skin cover.
- Inspect equipment before each day's work and correct any abnormal conditions.
- Water is the first aid treatment of choice when ammonia gets into the eyes or on the skin. In case of mishap, flush affected areas for 15 minutes and get medical help as soon as possible.
- Make sure all valves, lines, and connections are secure in order to reduce the chance of leaks or being doused during transfer.

Observe these precautions when working with anhydrous ammonia:

- Use good equipment specially designed for handling anhydrous ammonia.
- Keep your equipment in good repair. Worn hoses, loose connections, and other defects can cause accidents.
- Follow the prescribed sequence of operations for connecting to, filling, and disconnecting from the applicator tank.

- Never leave the equipment during the transfer operation.
- After filling the applicator tank, close all valves.

#### 4.2 Storing Ammonium Nitrate

The guidelines listed below must be followed when storing ammonium nitrate fertilizer:

- The minimum amount feasible of ammonium nitrate shall be stored.
- Storage buildings shall have adequate ventilation.
- All flooring in storage and handling areas shall be of noncombustible material, without open drains or traps.
- Buildings and structures shall be dry and free from water seepage through the roof, walls, and floors.
- Bags of ammonium nitrate shall not be stored within 30 inches of the storage building's walls and partitions.
- The height, width, and length of piles stored shall be uniform.
- Aisles shall be provided to separate piles by a clear space of not less than 3 feet in width.
- Ammonium nitrate shall be stored separately from flammable or combustible materials (e.g., paper, rags, hay, oils).
- Broken bags, spilled material, and discarded containers shall be promptly gathered and disposed.
- Prohibit smoking where ammonium nitrate is stored.
- Fire control devices such as a water hose or portable fire extinguishers must be available in the storage area.

## 5. Farm Equipment Safety

New farm equipment is specifically designed for safe handling and operation. Older farm equipment is outdated and missing some of the latest standard safety features. The following sections discuss general guidelines for farm equipment safety, including farmstead equipment, farm field equipment, guards, shields, and power take-off equipment (PTOs).

### 5.1 General Equipment Safety

Keeping equipment in good working condition is half the formula for being safe. The other half is the ability and awareness of the person operating the equipment. Equipment failure causes some farm accidents; however, most farm accidents are caused by tired, stressed, rushed, distracted, or incompetent operators. In addition to the specific safe handling rules for each type of farm equipment, there are ten basic guidelines for equipment safety:

- Read and comply with the operator's safety manual for each piece of farm equipment.
- Prepare for safety by wearing appropriate clothing, having enough rest, not drinking alcohol, and ensuring that all workers have been trained and are capable of safely using the farm equipment.

- Keep all guards, shields, and access doors in place when the equipment is in operation.
- Be aware of what you are doing and where you are going.
- Adjust equipment speed to fit operating conditions.
- Keep children and other people away from the working area.
- Take breaks from work, as necessary.
- Always stop the engine, disconnect the power source, and wait for all moving parts to stop before servicing, adjusting, cleaning, or unclogging equipment.
- Display the slow-moving-vehicle emblem on equipment driven on public roadways.
- Allow the engine to cool before refueling.

## 5.2 Farmstead Equipment

Farmstead equipment is agricultural machinery that is normally stationary. This includes materials handling equipment and accessories for such equipment whether or not the equipment is an integral part of a building. Examples of farmstead equipment include cotton gins, grain augers, crushers, sorters, and miscellaneous belt-driven equipment.

Farmstead equipment should have an audible warning device to indicate that the machine is about to be started. Farmstead equipment that is not properly guarded and shielded may pinch, crush, electrocute, or otherwise harm humans. Refer to the operator's manual for specific safety instructions for each piece of equipment.

Refer to WTAMU Lockout/Tagout Hazardous Energy Program 24.01.01.W1.24AR procedures to perform safely repairs or maintenance on electrical equipment.

## 5.3 Farm Field Equipment

Farm field equipment is agricultural machinery that is normally mobile. Examples of farm field equipment include combines, tractors, and their implements. Because tractor accidents account for 500 to 600 fatalities each year, this section will focus on tractor safety.

### **5.3.1 General Tractor Safety**

Tractor accidents are the leading cause of fatalities and accidents on Texas farms and ranches. Approximately 42% of these accidents are the result of operators being run over by tractors, 36% are due to tractor roll-overs, and 5% involve riders who fall off the tractor and are then run over by the attached trailing equipment. The following guidelines offer general safety tips for operating tractors:

- Know your tractor and how to use it safely. Regularly review the safety precautions in your operator's manual.
- Prepare for tractor work by inspecting the vehicle and wearing appropriate clothing.
- Ensure that new and inexperienced workers are properly trained in tractor operation.
- Never allow riders. A tractor should have only one person on board.

- Teach children to use tractors only after they have developed the strength, size, and maturity to operate a tractor safely.
- Install an approved rollover protective structure (ROPS) and seat belt on any tractor that is not equipped with these features. ROPS prevent tractor turnover injuries, but only if the seat belt is worn.
- Always wear a seat belt when driving a tractor equipped with a ROPS.
- Disengage drives and turn the engine off before leaving the tractor unattended.
- Keep yourself and others away from moving parts.
- Hitch loads only to the drawbar.
- When using three-point rear hitches, add front-end weights to maintain stability and control steering.
- Never bypass start the engine.

### **5.3.2 Tractor Driving Safety**

The following guidelines provide tips for tractor driving safety:

- Watch where you are going at all times. Be sure everyone is out of the way before moving.
- Watch for and avoid obstacles, ditches, embankments, and holes.
- Slow down when turning, crossing slopes, or driving on rough, slick, or muddy surfaces.
- It is safer to back up an incline.
- Apply power slowly when pulling a heavy load.
- Lock the brake pedals together for single action braking.

Tractor operators can help prevent back rollovers as follows:

- Only hitch loads to the drawbar.
- Limit the height of three-point hitches.
- Use front-end weights to stabilize heavy hauling loads.
- Start slowly.
- Change gears carefully.

Tractor operators can help prevent side rollovers as follows:

- Increase tractor width, if possible.
- Lock brakes together for road travel.
- Operate tractors only as recommended.
- Avoid steep slopes and ditches.
- Be careful when pulling heavy loads or working with a front-end loader.
- Turn corners slowly.

### 5.3.3 Roll-over Protective Structures

ROPS consist of cab frames that protect tractor operators. They are designed to prevent tractor rollover injuries. All tractors manufactured after October 25, 1976, must have ROPS. Older tractors may be retrofitted with a ROPS obtained from the tractor manufacturer. Installing a makeshift metal bar is not sufficient to protect people from the dangers of a tractor rollover. An OSHA-approved ROPS that meets durability tests is the only real protection against rollover injuries.

**NOTE:** *The only types of tractors that do not require ROPS include the following:*

- *Low profile tractors used for work that would interfere with a ROPS (e.g., picking orchards, vineyards, hopyards, etc.).*
- *Tractors with mounted equipment that is incompatible with a ROPS (e.g., cornpickers, cottonstrippers, fruit harvesters, etc.).*

### 5.3.4 Bypass Starting

Bypass starting occurs when an operator “bypasses” normal safety procedures and the normal starting system. A typical bypass occurs when someone standing on the ground touches a screwdriver or other metal object to the starter contacts and activates the engine. This action avoids standard safety devices that keep the engine from starting without someone in the driver’s seat. Another method of bypass starting occurs when someone uses the starting button to start a tractor from the ground.

**IMPORTANT:** *Any method of bypass starting is extremely dangerous. If the tractor is in gear and the bypass occurs, the machine will start and can injure or kill anyone in its path. This situation is even more serious if the tractor is equipped with a hydraulic clutch. If a tractor with a hydraulic clutch is bypass-started, it will lurch suddenly after hydraulic pressure is built up.*

All tractor operators should follow these safe-starting rules:

- Never start a tractor by shorting across the starter terminals.
- Keep tractors in good working order so they will start normally.
- If a tractor has a neutral start switch, but it starts in gear with the key or starter button, something is wrong. Fix the tractor immediately.
- Never wire around or defect the neutral start switch.
- Always place a tractor in neutral or park before starting it.
- Never start a tractor from the ground.

### 5.3.5 Grain Augers

A grain auger is a piece of farm equipment that helps transfer grain from one location to another. Tractor operators that move grain augers should take special precautions when working with this equipment.

**IMPORTANT:** *Moving grain augers in their elevated position may result in electrocution if the equipment contacts overhead power lines.*

Farm owners, managers, and operators should ensure that augers are in the lowered position before moving them. In addition, all augers should have warning signs that indicate the potential electrical hazards associated with moving the auger upright. Functional components of augers must be guarded

to the fullest extent possible.

#### 5.4 Hydraulic Equipment Safety

Farm equipment operators must be extremely careful when working around hydraulic equipment. Hydraulic pressure is often strong enough to knock a person out if a leak or explosion occurs. Follow these guidelines when working with hydraulic equipment:

- Inspect hydraulic equipment regularly for leaks. Report and fix any leaks immediately.
- Ensure that all couplings are properly installed and in good working condition.
- Ensure that all lines and fittings are in good condition. Repair or replace any equipment that is not in good condition.
- Lock transport wheels and support jacks on implements in place before disconnecting hydraulic cylinders. This action will prevent sudden shocks to the machine or personal injury.
- Keep couplings and hoses in good repair so that the hydraulic system can safely sustain maximum pressure.

#### 5.5 Guards, Shields, and PTOs

Guards and shields are extremely important because they keep operators from inadvertently contacting or being caught by moving machinery parts. Ensure that moving parts are guarded or shielded whenever possible. To prevent burns or fires, shield heat-producing components (e.g., exhaust pipes). Since all moving parts cannot be guarded due to their function, stay clear of these machines when they are in operation. In addition, turn these machines off if they need service, maintenance, or repair.

***IMPORTANT:*** *If you take guards or shields off, put them back on the machine. Replace them if they are lost or damaged.*

Guards and shields are absolutely essential for PTO farm equipment. Leave the master shield in place when the implement is unhitched. Replace missing or damaged shields immediately.

## 6. Fuel Storage

Fuel storage is an important safety concern in agriculture. The following sections discuss general safety guidelines for stationary fuel storage tanks, portable fuel tanks, and liquefied petroleum gas.

#### 6.1 Stationary Fuel Storage Tanks

Petroleum products for agricultural use, including gasoline and diesel fuel, are stored in Aboveground Storage Tanks (AST) or Underground Storage Tanks (UST). The TCEQ regulates AST's and UST's. Fuel tanks with volumes less than or equal to 1100 gallons are exempt from TCEQ requirements. Fuel tanks with volumes greater than 1100 gallons must meet these requirements.

- Notification
- Registration

- Annual Fees
- Record Keeping

## 6.2 Portable Fuel Tanks

Even small quantities of fuel, such as gasoline, kerosene, or diesel fuel, must be properly labeled and stored. Always use DOT approved metal tanks or UL or FM labeled containers to store small amounts of fuel. Store small portable fuel tanks in well ventilated areas away from other flammable materials or ignition sources. Do not use containers such as empty plastic milk jugs to store fuels. Please refer to WTAMU Chemical Safety Procedure 24.01.01.W1.22AR in the WTAMU Safety Manual for more information on flammable materials.

**IMPORTANT:** *Clearly label fuel containers to indicate contents.*

## 6.3 Liquefied Petroleum Gas

The Texas Railroad Commission regulates the sale and use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). There are several safety considerations associated with LPG. All LPG tanks must comply with Department of Transportation (DOT) standards for storage and use:

- Paint LPG tanks are either white or aluminum. Locate LPG tanks away from flammable materials and possible ignition sources. In addition, ensure that AST's have noncombustible structural supports and a firm masonry foundation so that the bottom of the tank does not touch the ground.
- LPG tanks cannot be downhill from flammable liquid tanks such as gasoline or diesel.
- Stationary LPG tanks cannot be placed in any area beneath an electric transmission or distribution line.
- LPG tanks must be equipped with hydrostatic relief valves, excess flow valves, etc., required by the Texas Railroad Commission.

**IMPORTANT:** *Portable LPG containers may be used within a building; however, they must be stored in a separate location outside of the building. Refer to WTAMU Fire and Life Safety Program 24.01.01.W1.26AR in the WTAMU Safety Manual for more information.*

The following table provides minimum safe distance requirements for the location of stationary LPG containers.

Location Description	Minimum Safe Distance		
	0-500.99 gallons	501-2000.99 gallons	2001-4009.99 gallons
Ignition Source/Combustible Materials	10 feet	15 feet	25 feet
Flammable Liquid Container	20 feet	20 feet	20 feet
Building	10 feet	15 feet	25 feet
Adjoining Property Line	10 feet	15 feet	25 feet
Roadway, Railway, Utility Line or Pipeline	10 feet	15 feet	25 feet

## 7. Grain Storage

Grain storage bins and hoppers pose severe hazards, including entrapment and suffocation. Each year, numerous people suffocate and die while working on or under the unstable materials contained in grain silos. Grain materials are unpredictable, and they move quickly---entrapment, burial, and suffocation can occur within seconds. In some cases, the surface material in a grain bin acts like quicksand. When a storage bin is emptied from the bottom, the grain material forms a funnel. The flow rate of this funnel can be strong enough to trap a worker and make rescue virtually impossible. In other cases, a condition known as bridging can create serious hazards. A bridge occurs when grain or other loose material sticks to the side of a bin that is being emptied from below. The bridge is highly unstable and dangerous. If it collapses, it can trap any worker either on or below it. Follow these guidelines to reduce the risks associated with grain storage:

- Assume that all stored materials are bridges and that the potential for entrapment and suffocation is constant.
- Do not enter a storage area from the bottom, if material is adhering to the sides.
- If you must enter a storage area, use a safety belt or harness with a lifeline. Always stay above the highest level of material. Never stand on top of stored material.
- Lock out supply and discharge equipment whenever a worker enters the storage area.
- Post signs that indicate the hazards of working with stored materials.
- Ensure that storage areas are equipped with mechanical devices so that workers are not required to enter the area.

## 8. Livestock Safety

Farm animals are responsible for many disabling injuries. Although animal-related injuries are generally less severe than injuries caused by farm machinery, such accidents cost time, money, and productivity. The following guidelines offer general safety instructions for working with any animals:

- Take good care of animals and treat them kindly.
- Use adequate restraining and handling facilities when working with animals.
- Always leave yourself an escape route when working with animals (i.e., do not work in small, confined areas or back yourself into a corner).
- Do not put your hands, legs, or feet in gate or chute closures where you may become pinned or crushed by a large animal.
- Reduce the chance for slips and falls by keeping handling areas free from debris. Attach "no slip" safety strips to slick areas. Stay away from frightened, sick, or hurt animals whenever possible. Take care around animals with young offspring.
- Wear protective clothing around animals, as appropriate.
- Do not handle livestock when you are alone.
- Keep children away from unfamiliar or unfriendly animals.
- Treat manure pits as a confined space. Exercise caution as appropriate. Refer to the Manure Pits section for more information.

The following sections provide specific instructions for working with certain animals.

### 8.1 Beef Cattle

Ordinary beef cattle generally have a calm disposition; however, they are easily spooked. Because cattle can see almost 360 degrees without moving their heads, a quick movement from behind can scare them just as easily as a sudden movement from the front. Loud, sudden noises and small dogs tend to upset cattle. Although cattle are not likely to attack humans, their size and weight can make them dangerous. Always leave yourself an escape route when working with cattle. Keep small children and strangers away from cattle. Remember, cattle tend to kick forward and then backward with their back legs. If you are working near the udder or flank area of a cow, consider pulling the back leg forward to prevent a kick.

### 8.2 Dairy Cattle

Dairy cattle tend to be more nervous than other domestic animals. Always announce your presence to a cow by speaking calmly or touching the animal gently. When moving cows into a constraining place, such as a milk parlor, always give them time to adjust before beginning work. If a dairy cow tends to kick, consider using a hobble.

### 8.3 Swine

Hogs can be dangerous because they can bite with enough force to cause serious injury. Likewise, a hog's size and weight can easily harm a person if the animal steps on, lays on, or charges a person. Guiding hogs for sorting or movement to a new pen requires a lot of patience and adequate facilities. An easy way to guide a hog backwards is to place a box or basket over the hog's head. The hog will then back away to avoid the box. As with cattle, you should announce your presence to a hog by speaking calmly.

### 8.4 Horses

Take care not to spook horses with loud noise. If you intend to work with a horse, you should know how to ride properly, saddle, and handle a horse. Ride with extra care around trees, water, or rough terrain.

### 8.5 Sheep

Take care when working around sheep to avoid being butted by a ram. To safely immobilize a sheep for handling, place the animal on his rump and tilt him far enough back to keep the rear hooves off the ground.

### 8.6 Poultry

Chickens are fairly harmless, although geese, gobblers, and roosters can harm children and the elderly. Most hazards associated with poultry concern improper equipment usage, duct, and slippery surfaces within poultry facilities.

## 9. **Manure Pits**

Manure pit systems are often used to store large amounts of raw manure under animal confinement buildings.

Manure pits make cleanup easier for farm employees; however, these pits may contain hazardous atmospheres. Due to the nature of these pits, workers should always treat manure pits as confined spaces. Manure pits may contain one or more of the following gases in dangerous concentrations:

- Methane
- Hydrogen sulfide
- Carbon dioxide
- Ammonia

Within the confined space of a manure pit, these gases can create an oxygen deficient, toxic, and /or explosive atmosphere.

Treat manure pits like any other type of confined space. For example,

- Ensure that manure pits are properly ventilated.
- Test the pit atmosphere before entering the pit.
- Have a safety attendant ready to lift workers within the manure pit to safety, if necessary.
- Always wear a safety belt or harness with a lifeline when working within a manure pit.

Please refer to 24.01.01.W1.28AR, Confined Space Entry, in the WTAMU Safety Manual for more information.

## **10. Towing Safety**

When towing a trailer or farm equipment, follow these guidelines to ensure driving safety:

- Ensure that the trailer and hitching attachments meet local and state requirements. The trailer must have a current tag and registration.
- Inspect the trailer's wheels and the towing vehicle's wheels to ensure they are in good working order.
- Ensure that the trailer hitch is sufficiently strong and properly mounted.
- Make sure that the towing ball is the correct size for the trailer hitch.
- Always secure a safety chain between the trailer and the towing vehicle.
- Inspect all indicator lights to ensure they are working.
- Adjust mirrors as necessary to view the roadway behind the trailer.
- Adjust your speed and apply brakes evenly to allow for increased stopping distances.
- When backing a trailer, it is helpful to have another person behind the trailer to guide you. Put your hand on the bottom section of the steering wheel and turn the wheel in the direction that you want the trailer to move.

## **11. Hearing Conservation Program**

Excessive noise levels may permanently or temporarily damage a person's hearing. Whenever possible, employees should reduce noise levels to an acceptable level. The following table outlines OSHA limits for acceptable noise exposure indicated as decibels (dB).

Duration/Day (Hours)	Sound Level (dB)
8	90
6	92
4	95
3	97
2	100
1 ½	102
1	105
½	110
¼ or less	115

Hearing loss can be permanent ---wear protective equipment when noise levels are high. Before using PPE such as ear plugs or muffs to reduce noise exposure, try to reduce noise levels by changing work procedures.

Maintenance practices, such as the following, can reduce noise levels:

- Replacing worn or loose machine parts.
- Performing high-noise operations during hours when people are less likely to be affected.
- Maintaining and lubricating equipment to eliminate rattles and squeaks.

The following table illustrates various noise levels:

Noise	Decibels (dB)
Whisper	10
Quiet Office	30
Street Sounds	70
Factory	80-90
Sander	85
Subway	90
Pneumatic Drill	100
Artillery/Car Horn	120

Engineering controls, such as the following, can also reduce noise levels:

- Replace noisy material.
- Using large, low speed fans.
- Considering the noise level of new equipment or processes before purchasing or implementing.
- Placing heavy machines on rubber mountings.
- Using sound-absorbing acoustical tiles or baffles.
- Placing noisy machinery or operations in a separate area or room.
- Enclosing noisy conveyors.

Areas that may require hearing protection include machine shops, the power plant, etc. Observe all warning signs and wear hearing protection whenever necessary. Do not interfere with, remove, or modify noise abatement equipment. Keep all equipment properly maintained, and report any malfunctions immediately. Refer to the Personal Protective Equipment Procedure, 24.01.01.W1.27AR) for more information on hearing protection. Direct all questions regarding hearing conservation to EHS. When requested and necessary, the Safety Office monitors noise levels.

## **12. Heat Stress**

Refer to the WTAMU Thermal Stress Prevention and Management Procedure 24.01.01.W1.14AR for information on heat stress.

## **13. Lockout/Tagout**

Refer to the WTAMU Lockout/Tagout Hazardous Energy Program 24.01.01.W1.24AR for more information on lockout/tagout procedures.

## **14. Euthanasia and Associated Procedures**

Refer to WTAMU Institutional Animal Care and Use Procedure: 15.99.05.W1.02AR for more information on euthanasia and associated safety procedures.

## **15. Products Administered to Livestock and Safety of Humans**

Refer to WTAMU Institutional Animal Care and Use Procedure: 15.99.05.W1.02AR (Occupational Health and Safety); 24.01.01.W1.15AR Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan; 24.01.01.W1.19AR Reproductive Risks procedure; 24.01.01.W1.23AR Biological Safety procedure; 24.01.01.W1.43 AR Occupational Health Program, and associated [Environmental Health and Safety procedures](#) for more information.

## **16. Training**

West Texas A&M University Environmental Health and Safety will follow the Texas A&M University System Policy [33.05.02 Required Employee Training](#). Staff and faculty whose required training is delinquent more than 90 days will have their access to the Internet terminated until all trainings are completed. Only Blackboard and Single Sign-on will be accessible. Internet access will be restored once training has been completed. Student workers whose required training is delinquent more than 90 days will need to be terminated by their manager through Student Employment.

## **17. Record Retention**

No official state records may be destroyed without permission from the Texas State Library as outlined in [Texas Government Code, Section 441.187](#) and [13 Texas Administrative Code, Title 13, Part 1, Chapter 6, Subchapter A, Rule 6.7](#). The Texas State Library certifies Agency retention schedules as a means of granting permission to destroy official state records.

West Texas A&M University Records Retention Schedule is certified by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. West Texas A&M University Environmental Health and Safety will follow [Texas A&M University Records Retention Schedule](#) as stated in the Standard Operating Procedure [61.99.01.W0.01 Records](#)

[Management](#). All official state records (paper, microform, electronic, or any other media) must be retained for the minimum period designated.

**Contact Office**  
WTAMU Environmental Health and Safety  
(806) 651-2270