



## Vehicle and Machinery Maintenance

Many serious incidents on farms involve machinery, often during maintenance or unblocking. In maintenance work, conditions are very different from those normally encountered and new hazards may be introduced. It is essential that everyone involved is trained to be aware of the hazards and the correct precautions to take to prevent harm

### Main Points

Before carrying out maintenance, adjustments or dealing with a blockage. Follow the safe stop rule:-

- Engage handbrake
- Controls in neutral
- Switch off engine (or turn off power)
- Remove key (or lock-off the power supply)

Before you start maintenance, make sure:-

- all movement has stopped before removing any guards;
- workers are properly trained to do the job;
- adequate tools, instructions, and manuals are provided for maintaining, adjusting, cleaning and unblocking machines;
- safe working practices are devised and used;

- stored energy, eg from compressed material, springs or hydraulics, is released safely before you start work;
- machines or parts supported by hydraulics are prevented from descending by using mechanical devices such as stops or jacks when people work under them.

## Dealing with blockages or other problems

- Always follow the Safe Stop procedure before carrying out any intervention.
- Secure anything which could fall on you, eg by using props or scotches on tailgates/doors.
- Secure anything which could move or rotate, eg by using chocks.
- Remember that energy is stored in springs or hydraulics, for example. Consider how will you stop this energy being released or release it safely.
- Use the right tools for the job. Remember, machine components may suddenly move when a blockage is cleared.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions/procedures, eg as set out in the operator's manual.
- Use built-in ladders and other purpose-designed access points and platforms where provided. Where such facilities don't exist you will need to consider alternative safe means of access, eg with measures provided to prevent falls.
- When the job is finished, always replace the guards before running the machine.
- Check the machine over and make sure people are well clear before restarting.

## Vehicle Repair

During Vehicle repair:-

- make sure brakes are applied and wheels chocked;
- always prop raised bodies. Do not rely on hydraulic systems for support;
- start and run engines with brakes on and in neutral gear;
- never work under vehicles supported on jacks alone – always use axle stands;
- beware of the explosion risk when draining and repairing fuel tanks;

- avoid burns from battery short circuits by disconnecting the battery before starting work;
- older brake linings may also contain asbestos. Never 'blow out' brakes, always use a vacuum or other dust-free method. Do not use asbestos brake lining as a replacement

## Wheel Changing

Serious accidents, including fatalities, have been caused by unsafe practices during wheel/tyre changing and when inflating tyres. When using jacks to lift or support vehicles or machines.

- use the correct jack for the job, capable of supporting the load imposed on it;
- use the correct jacking point, as identified on the machine or in the operator's manual;
- position axle stands to give additional support;
- chock the other wheels to prevent movement;
- carry out the work on firm, level ground.

Tyre/Wheel repair and replacement should only be tackled by competent staff.

## Repairs in the Field

Where you have to carry out repairs or maintenance in the field, eg where a machine has broken down, it is important to make sure that you assess all risks properly before tackling the job. Factors to consider may include:

- the impact of adverse weather conditions such as wind or rain;
- poor lighting, eg at dusk;
- ground conditions, eg wet or soft surfaces;
- the location of OHPLs;
- the need to ensure safety for access or work at height, eg on combines.

Always plan the job and use safe systems of work whether in the workshop or in the field

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