

Safety on the Farm

By: Randy Leibel

Living out on the farm is much different than living in town. You have to deal with way more expenses, a lot more work, and possibly more stress. So by cutting the cost of each and every one of the expenses, the farmers then get a lot of stress off of their backs by doing most of the work themselves. Some of this work is very dangerous and requires careful procedures and precise work. If any of the procedures are done incorrectly, serious damage can be done to your body. Your “fix” won’t last very long and it will make your original problem on your implement even worse; or your work might not be good enough, making your machinery not perform as efficiently.

If the project is really big, the stress can really build up because of seeding and harvest season(s), this is an example of psychological hazards (which farmers have quite a few of). Battery acid is an example of a chemical hazard because battery acid can eat through a lot of things including the human skin if it comes into contact. It can cause major damage and needs immediate medical attention. An example of biological hazards would be the extreme temperatures, which can make the body to either have a heat stroke or have frostbite if not properly covered/cooled or not staying hydrated. In this essay, you will learn about a true story about a woman who is very lucky to have her vision due to a farm accident.

On a sunny summer evening, my mother, father and sister and I were out changing tractor tires in our shop.

“If mother can pump up the tire, then Jenn and I can put pressure in various places to help it to seal and stay on the rim. Randy you watch the edge of the rim and watch when it hooks,” my father ordered. And everyone did as they were told.

Mom would pump up the air inside the tire, Dad and Jenn would wiggle it around and put pressure on the edges of the tire and I would keep a sharp eye out for any danger.

For quite some time we wrestled and wrestled with the first tire. About an hour has passed, then an hour and a half, then two hours and finally pop! The tire went on clean, so clean that it made me look filthy. Afterwards, Dad filled up the tire to the correct air pressure and then he double checked that everything was safe and secure. We then went on to the next tire. This one was just as hard if not worse than the first tire that we wrestled with.

“My goodness people! These tires shouldn’t be nearly as hard as they are today!” my father exclaims. That statement was on everyone’s mind, throughout the whole operation, and it really exaggerated when we got to the back tires.

After we were done the left side, it was time to move onto the right side. So as usual, dad was inflating the tire but this time it didn't work. Then my dad got frustrated and brought out the big guns. He came back with our bead blaster. This little machine contains quite a bit of air and when you're ready to use it just pull back the lever, let the air just blast the bead of the tire and make sure you don't blow away with the bead blaster because this little guy will have some kick to it. My dad comes back with the bead blaster full of air and he tells everybody to get ready for this massive force of air to go into the tire and make sure nothing was in the way. He starts to count down from three... Two... one... POOF! BAM!!!

The tire caught a grip on the rim and exploded right in all of our faces! In that split second everyone was blown to the ground and my mother was screaming in pain. We all asked what happened to her and what hurts.

In tears she replied, “my eyes are in a lot of pain! I can't even open them!” The rest of us knew exactly what to do and took action right away.

Jenn scrambled to the house to call the hospital while dad fired up his truck to be ready to roll coal into town and I watched over mother while she washed her eyes under a tap and everyone else got everything ready to make a run for it.

As my father rushed mother to the local hospital in record time, the hospital made preparations prior to them arriving. When they arrived, the nurses immediately took action the moment they saw my mother. The first thing they did before the doctor came in was put eye drops in her eyes. To this day we cannot specify if the eye drops were to dilate the pupils or were painkillers.

When the doctor finally came in to examine her eyes the took her into a room that was similar to an optometrist's room.

“They led me into this room where my daughter described it as an optometrist's room with the big machine magnify your eyes, and all sorts of other special equipment,” my mother described.

As the doctors examined her eyes, they noticed that they were badly damaged and couldn't believed what they saw.

“When I saw what happened to eyes, I was in absolute shock,” says the doctor, “it was looking at a golf ball, that’s how badly pitted they were. She is a very lucky woman to have her eyesight still with her to this day.”

After the exam has been concluded, the doctors gave my mother two prescription eyedrop bottles, one for pain and the other for dilating the pupil. As I saw the truck pull up to the house, Jenn and I led her to her bedroom where she layed there for about 3-5 days. My sister and I took care of her for those 3-5 days, and I tell you she got the best care there was in the whole county.

On the morning she walked out of her room with eyes open all of us were very grateful to have our mother back. We finally had a well cooked supper and the house was filled with laughter and joy. With the Leibel tradition running through our blood, the following day we put my mother back to work.

It appeared to me that evening that none of us were actually being safe. None of us were wearing any kind of PPE to protect our eyes, feet, or anything. Also I think we should’ve installed some sort of eye wash station in our shop or in our house for any incidents that come our way again. Another thing that should’ve been really important is proper training so that all of us knew what we were doing, not just “winging it”. Lastly we should have made up some kind of guard/control to put in between us and the tire.

I personally learned that you must be very cautious of your surroundings, make sure that everything is working properly, wear all PPE and always follow the instructions carefully and properly, because if you don’t, you’ll find yourself severely hurt or have a near death experience.

In the end, farmers are amazing people and are capable of many things. But sometimes this gets into their heads and they think they’re invincible, and they’re not. We all need training, we all need to obey orders and follow instructions and wear all of the required PPE so that in the end we all come home safely and healthy to a family that loves and cares for us.