



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Hardin County Extension News Release

For Further Information Contact:

Mark Badertscher

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Educator

Phone – 419-674-2297

E-Mail – badertscher.4@osu.edu

For Immediate Release – January 13, 2016

Winter Farm Safety

Winter eventually arrived bringing daily cold temperatures. Farmers have outdoor tasks that need to be done regardless of the weather or temperatures. Livestock producers have to feed and care for animals and the grain farmer has to check or load stored grain. Wood may need to be cut for fuel.

Prolonged exposure to cold, wet, and windy conditions can be dangerous. In these conditions, farmers are at a higher risk for many injuries, such as frostbite, overexertion, muscle strain, falls, or heart attack. Kent McGuire, Ohio State University Extension Ag Safety and Health Coordinator, recommends the following guidelines for farmers while working in winter conditions.

Wear appropriate clothing for weather conditions. Even a simple task may take longer than planned so prepare for cold conditions. Remove or replace wet or damp clothing as soon as possible, including gloves. If possible, perform work during the warmest part of the day and take frequent short breaks in a warm dry area to allow the body to rest and warm up.

Keep travel paths free from ice and snow. Be observant to areas such as water troughs or leaking roofs/gutters that may allow water to accumulate and freeze in walking areas. Stretch your muscles before you begin to shovel snow or remove ice. Do not overload the shovel, and take frequent breaks to stretch your back. Bend your knees and let your legs do the lifting. Avoid twisting motions which can lead to pulled muscles.

When walking on an icy or snow covered area, take short steps and walk at a slower pace to be able to react quickly to slips. Keep hands out of pockets when walking to reduce the risk of

falling or losing your balance while walking on ice or snow. Use 3 points of contact when mounting or dismounting equipment (one hand/two feet or two hands/one foot contact). Be aware of potentially slick ground conditions when dismounting equipment.

Be aware of vision transitions moving from outdoor to indoor environments. Wear sunglasses to reduce glare and protect your eyes from ultraviolet rays being reflected from snowy surfaces. Remember that visibility can be reduced to near zero in the immediate area during snow removal operations such as plowing, sweeping, and snow blowing. Utilize a visual reference point to stay on course and avoid any potential hazards. Use caution with gas powered equipment. Dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated by gas-powered equipment as well as alternative heating sources. Use these items only in well-ventilated areas.

Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, ear lobes or nose tip. Also, watch for signs of hypothermia: uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If symptoms of hypothermia are detected, seek a warm location, remove any wet clothing and warm the center of the body first. Get medical attention as soon as possible for both frostbite and hypothermia.

Farm activities do not stop just because of the cold. However, just as the farmer takes care of their livestock during the cold, they also need to take precautions to protect themselves.

Article written by Ed Lentz, OSU Extension – Hancock County and edited by Mark Badertscher, OSU Extension – Hardin County.