

## Toolbox Talks



### We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety MUST come first.



**emergencyplus**  
Save the App that could save your life.

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In case of emergency, CALL 000 or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.

**POISONS 13 11 26**  
Poisons Information Centre

### A Practical Guide

## Working Near Water

We all know water is essential for our crops, our livestock, and life itself. But as much as we rely on it, water can also be one of the trickiest safety concerns on the farm. Whether we're dealing with irrigation ditches, dams, or natural water bodies, working near water comes with its own set of challenges.

The presence of water when performing farm tasks can increase the likelihood of electrocution, pressure injections and cuts, slips, trips, and falls, and the chance of being exposed to zoonotic diseases. Drowning incidents on farms are a significant concern, especially where children are involved. This Toolbox Talk will focus on awareness of water hazards and steps to take to reduce the risk of drowning.

### The Hazards and Risks

Farms present numerous water-related risks, and various tasks necessitate working near water sources. Farm tasks that often bring people into close proximity with water include:

**Irrigation:** Farm irrigation systems require workers to manage pipes, valves, and pumps near water sources such as ponds, wells, or rivers.

**Livestock Watering:** Providing water to livestock involves maintaining troughs, tanks, or natural water bodies, which may require workers to enter or work around water.

**Crop Activities:** Harvesting crops near water bodies can require workers to navigate uneven terrain close to rivers, ponds, or irrigation ditches.

**Ditch Maintenance:** Cleaning, repairing, or constructing ditches may involve workers being in or around water.

**Flood Management:** During flooding events, farm workers might need to manage floodwaters, reinforce dams or levees, repair fences, and perform emergency flood control measures.

**Aquaculture:** Workers in aquaculture operations (fish farming) are constantly in close proximity to water bodies, managing fish tanks, ponds, and water quality.

**Dam Maintenance:** Farms often have dams for irrigation or livestock. Workers may be tasked with maintaining dam walls, cleaning debris, and ensuring proper water circulation.

**Equipment Cleaning:** Cleaning and maintaining farm equipment near water sources might involve workers being close to the water's edge.

**Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance:** Farms with ornamental water features or gardens may employ workers to maintain these areas, bringing them into proximity with water.



### Possible Harm

Drowning occurs when a person's airway gets blocked by water, preventing them from breathing. This lack of oxygen can cause several harmful effects in the body. This can occur even with very small amounts of water.

**Lack of Oxygen:** When someone is drowning, their lungs fill with water instead of air. This prevents them from getting oxygen, which the body needs to function properly.

**Brain Damage:** Without oxygen, the brain starts to suffer damage within minutes. Lack of oxygen affects brain cells, leading to confusion, unconsciousness, and, ultimately, permanent brain damage.

**Heart Problems:** The heart struggles to pump blood effectively without oxygen. This can lead to irregular heartbeats or cardiac arrest, where the heart stops beating altogether.

**Lung Damage:** Inhaling water can damage the lungs. This damage can cause a condition called pulmonary edema, where the lungs fill with fluids, making it difficult to breathe.

**Secondary Drowning:** Sometimes, even after a person is rescued and seems fine, complications can arise hours later due to the inhaled water causing inflammation in the lungs. This delayed reaction can lead to breathing difficulties and can be life-threatening.

**Death:** If a person doesn't receive help in time, the lack of oxygen can be fatal. In many cases, drowning leads to death due to the severe damage caused to the brain and vital organs.

## Toolbox Talks

### A Practical Guide Working Near Water

## Reducing the Risk of Workers and Bystanders Drowning

### Proper Training and Education

#### Participate in Training Sessions:

Participate actively in comprehensive training sessions designed to educate you about the risks associated with working near water. Familiarise yourself with proper procedures and emergency response protocols to stay prepared.

**Engage in Toolbox Talks:** Attend regular safety meetings where water-related hazards and precautions are discussed. Stay informed and contribute to creating a safer work environment.

**First Aid and CPR Training:** Equip yourself with essential first aid and CPR skills. In emergencies, your knowledge can make a significant difference. Be prepared to respond promptly and effectively.

**Safety Equipment:** The safety equipment required will depend on the task being performed. If life jackets are a recommended item of PPE for the task being performed, then they should be worn. Ensure life jackets are properly fitted and well-maintained.

**Know Rescue Equipment:** Familiarise yourself with the location and usage of rescue tools, such as life hooks and floatation devices. Be ready to assist or be assisted in case of an emergency.

**Emergency Flood Plan:** Develop and regularly review an emergency plan for responding to flooding events. Ensure the plan identifies evacuation procedures.

### Safe Work Practices

**Buddy Up:** If possible, always work with a buddy near water. The buddy system ensures there's immediate assistance available in case of an emergency.

**Heed Signage:** Respect warning signs. Stay vigilant and aware of your surroundings.

**Use Safe Entry and Exit Points:** Plan your approach and departure from water bodies. Ensure the designated points are safe, easily navigable, and free from hazards.

### Links and Resources

NCFH - Floods preparation and Clean Up [farmerhealth.org.au](http://farmerhealth.org.au)

BOM – Preparing for a Flood [bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au)



### Regular Inspections

**Inspect Equipment:** Regularly inspect equipment or tools used around water. Access equipment like ladders, steps and handrails should be checked for soundness frequently. Gates, covers, and barricades to prevent unauthorised access should also be frequently inspected and maintained. Report any issues promptly to prevent incidents due to equipment failures.

**Monitor Infrastructure:** Keep an eye out for signs of wear, erosion, or damage in dams, irrigation ditches, and other water structures. Report concerns immediately to address potential risks.

### Emergency Preparedness

**Know Emergency Protocols:** Familiarise yourself with the emergency response plan for water-related incidents. Understanding the procedures ensures swift and organised actions during crises.

**Communicate:** Let others know where you will be working, what you are doing, and when to expect you to check-in. Carry an appropriate form of communication with you at all times. Depending on your location this may be a mobile phone, two-way radio, emergency locator beacon, or other device that can be used to communicate in an emergency.

**Participate in Drills:** Actively engage in emergency response drills. Practice ensures that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities in real emergencies.

## Reducing the Risk of Children Drowning

Reducing the risk of children drowning on farms is of utmost importance and requires a combination of preventive measures, supervision, and education. Here are some ways to enhance safety and minimise the risk of drowning incidents involving children on farms:

**Fencing and Barriers:** Install secure fencing around water bodies, such as pools, dams, and irrigation ditches wherever practicable, to prevent unsupervised access by children. Use self-latching gates and childproof locks to ensure the barriers are not easily opened by curious children.

**Supervision:** Always actively supervise children, especially young ones, when they are near water sources. Designate specific responsible adults to watch over them. Avoid distractions like phones or chores when supervising children around water. Stay focused on their safety.

**Teaching Water Safety:** Educate children about the dangers of water bodies on the farm. Teach them basic water safety rules, including the importance of not swimming or playing near water without adult supervision.

**Swimming Lessons:** If you are a parent or guardian of a child who frequents a farm then consider enrolling children in swimming lessons as soon as possible. Swimming and water safety skills can greatly reduce the risk of drowning. However, remember that even with swimming skills, constant adult supervision is crucial.

**Life Jackets:** Ensure that children wear properly fitting and approved life jackets when near water bodies, especially if they cannot swim proficiently.

**Clear Communication:** Clearly communicate rules about staying away from water bodies without adult supervision. Encourage children to inform an adult if they see another child near water unsupervised.

**Secure Wells, Dips, and Tanks:** Secure wells, dips, and water storage tanks with childproof covers or fences to prevent accidental falls. Regularly check these covers to ensure they are intact and functioning properly.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Teach children how to call for emergency help and provide them with necessary information, including the farm's address and contact numbers.

**Regular Safety Checks:** Conduct regular safety checks around the farm to identify potential water hazards. Address any issues promptly.

**Lead by Example:** Adults and older children should demonstrate safe behaviour around water, wearing life jackets and following established safety rules.

# Toolbox Talks

## Facilitator Guide

### INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

#### How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

**Note:** This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

## A Practical Guide Working Near Water

### Introduction

- Welcome everyone to the session.
- Explain the importance of the session: raising awareness about water hazards on farms and ensuring the safety of everyone involved, especially farm visitors and children.
- Emphasise the importance of being vigilant and proactive in ensuring personal safety in these challenging work environments.

**Icebreaker** Ask participants to briefly share an experience or a safety tip related to water hazards on farms. It could be a precaution they take, an incident they witnessed, or a safety measure they find effective.

**Distribution of Resources** Handout printed Toolbox Information Sheets and any other resources.

### Key Points

#### Farm Water Hazards

- Identify and discuss potential water hazards on your farm including dams, irrigation ditches, wells, and tanks.
- Identify situations and tasks that increase the risk of drowning.

#### Causes and Prevention

- Discuss common causes of water-related accidents.
- Discuss any preventive measures that are in place on your farm.

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Importance of wearing appropriate PPE, such as life jackets, gloves, and non-slip footwear when working near water.
- Proper usage and maintenance of PPE to ensure effectiveness.

#### Emergency Response Protocols

- Communicate guidelines for immediate response during water-related emergencies, including drowning incidents or equipment malfunctions.
- Discuss the importance of communication devices and protocols.
- Discuss emergency flood plan for the farm.

#### Safe Work Practices

- Discuss safe work practices required for relevant farm tasks.

#### Child Safety

- Discuss any specific measures to protect children.

#### Regular Inspections and Maintenance

- Reinforce the need to conduct routine checks tools and equipment and how timely repairs and maintenance can reduce the risk of incidents due to equipment failures.



### Interactive Discussion and Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences and challenges related to working around water.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

### Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

### Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk how you want workers to stay safe.

Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

### Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this Toolbox Talk in their daily work.

### Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.

# Toolbox Talks

## Facilitator Guide

# CASE STUDIES



## Risk Management Tools

### DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX

**Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing.**

All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

**farmsafe.org.au**

P. +61 2 6269 5622 | E. [info@farmsafe.org.au](mailto:info@farmsafe.org.au)

**Disclaimer:** This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

### CASE STUDY 1

## Life Jackets Save Lives

### Scenario

**Background:** BlueWaves Aquaculture, a leading fish farming facility, was conducting routine maintenance on their fish tanks. The task involved workers entering the tanks for cleaning and inspection. A ladder used to access one of the tanks hadn't been inspected for some time and rust had eaten through the supporting bolts.

**Incident:** Bob was climbing down the ladder into the tank when the supporting bolts gave way causing Bob to be knocked unconscious. Luckily Bob was wearing a life jacket and working with a buddy.

**Response:** Bob's lifejacket prevented him from being submerged while Bob's buddy called for help. Other workers on the farm followed the emergency procedures that they had been trained in and safely extracted Bob from the tank and emergency services transported him to hospital. Bob fully recovered from this incident.

| QUESTION  | ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE  |
|---|--|
| What could be done to prevent this accident from occurring? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More frequent inspection routines for ladders and access equipment.</li> <li>• More stringent repairs and maintenance using rust-resistant equipment.</li> <li>• Using cameras or mechanical devices to inspect and clean tanks to remove the need for workers to physically enter the tank.</li> </ul> |
| What contributed to Bob's successful rescue and recovery?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a buddy system in place.</li> <li>• Having communication devices available.</li> <li>• Wearing PPE.</li> <li>• Emergency response plans and procedures being in place.</li> <li>• Other workers being trained in emergency procedures.</li> </ul>  |

### CASE STUDY 2

## Unseen Dangers

### Scenario

**Background:** On a large cane farm, irrigation was in full swing. At 9pm one night a worker realised that they hadn't checked the pump on the side of an irrigation ditch that day.

**Situation:** The worker decided to drive out to check the pump without telling anyone else where they were going.

**Action Taken:** The worker drove the farm work vehicle to the location of the pump. In order to use the vehicle lights to see what they were doing, the ute was parked on a slope leading down to the irrigation ditch and facing the pump.

**Incident:** While the worker was inspecting the pump the brakes on the farm vehicle failed. The vehicle rolled down the slope striking the worker and knocking him into the water. The worker was pinned underneath the water for a short time before managing to free himself and making his way to dry ground. The worker suffered broken bones and couldn't leave the scene to raise the alarm.

**Response:** No one realised that the worker was missing until he failed to attend the morning Toolbox Talk. It took a search party several hours to find him and alert emergency services. Due to the length of time between the injuries being inflicted and help being received, the worker required extensive rehabilitation. In addition to multiple fractures, he also suffered from lung damage due to inhaling water.

### DISCUSSION

#### Use this case study to discuss:

- Following communication protocols and the importance of making sure that someone knows where you are at all times.
- Remaining aware of your surroundings.
- Vehicle safety around water.

## Toolbox Talks

### Facilitator Guide

### INSTRUCTIONS

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box – they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

A Practical Guide

## Working Near Water

# On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

### On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants

#### EMPLOYER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

#### 1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature



# Toolbox Talks Facilitator Guide

A Practical Guide  
Working Near Water

## On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED



**Australian Government**  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

This project is supported by the Department of  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through  
funding from the Australian Government's National  
Farm Safety Education Fund.

### 2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

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