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## Winter farm safety advice

In the past, winter saw a dip in farm accidents as field activity dropped from summer highs, but in 2014, 17% of fatal accidents occurred in November and December, so safety is a year-round issue



Revised safety standards for agricultural vehicles take effect from 1 January 2016

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**T**here has been a major trend in recent years of tractor crush deaths in the farmyard. A number of these have occurred when foddering livestock. Collapse of polythene wrapped bales or a tractor rolling forward to crush a person are among the causes. It is vital to ensure a machine's handbrake is securely applied and that you avoid danger zones such as adjacent to raised loaders holding bales, for example.

The HSA recently issued an information sheet on working safely with bales, available at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

### Electrical installations

Winter is a good time to have farm electrical installations checked by a competent electrician.

Ensure that residual current devices (RCD) are in working order. This is done by safely tripping and resetting the test button.

As the component parts are mechanical, test them at least twice a year.

The RCD device provides protection where mobile electrical appliances receive an electrical supply from a socket outlet. An RCD detects a fault where electricity leaks from the circuit causing an electrocution threat and switches off the power. The device trips at 30 milliamps and within 40 milliseconds.



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Testing is required to ensure that the switching mechanism in the RCD is working properly.

Further information on safety with farm electrics is available at [www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/en/downloads/ESB\\_Farm\\_Safety.pdf](http://www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/en/downloads/ESB_Farm_Safety.pdf).

### Farmyard lighting

In a recent HSA study, farmers considered that better lighting of farmyards could improve safety. Pay particular attention to lighting levels of commonly used walkways and farm buildings. Replace blown bulbs and clean the polycarbonate covers of fluorescent lighting – this can increase lighting by up to 50%.

Care is needed when accessing lighting for maintenance. The best approach is to use a safety platform with edge protection. If using a ladder, it should be sound and be secured at both the base and a height.

Lighting can also improve farm security levels.

### Fire safety

- Check for any areas where a person could get trapped in the event of a fire and eliminate the hazard.
- Check that hay and straw is stored separately from other buildings, particularly those housing fuels, agrochemicals and machinery.
- Store flammable material separately from livestock buildings, as a fire spreads very rapidly and evacuation could be hazardous.
- Hay or straw should not be in contact with electrical components or lighting, as heat from these could cause ignition.
- If a fire occurs, evacuate persons to a safe area as quickly as possible and call 112 or 999 without delay.

### Prevent fire in the home

Fire prevention in the home should also be given consideration as winter approaches. Check that smoke alarms are installed and working, escape routes are unobstructed and that fire-fighting equipment, including fire extinguishers and fire blankets, are serviced.

Further information on fire prevention is available at [www.fireireland.ie](http://www.fireireland.ie).

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### Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS)

All Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) TAMS schemes are open for application. Applications can be made up to the end of 2020. These aid a wide range of farm safety measures including:

- Both fixed and mobile cattle and sheep-handling facilities.
- Safety rails on silo walls.
- Replacement of hinged doors / sheet gates with sliding or roller doors.
- Retrofitting of roof lights with safety cages.
- Electrical rewiring of existing farm buildings.
- Installation of yard lights (metal halide or LCD).
- Protective fences of slurry store, slurry agitation for external agitation tanks, tank extension to provide external agitation, simple aeration systems.
- Replacement of slats.

Farmers should examine how they can best avail of TAMS to make farms safer.

To claim a TAMS grant, it is mandatory that all applicants will have completed within the last five years prior to the submission of their claim for payment the half-day farm safety code of practice or the FETAC Level 6 advanced certificate in agriculture (Green Cert).

Your claim for payment will not be processed until evidence of completion of the course is provided. Teagasc is currently taking bookings of half-day farm safety courses at all offices.

### Be winter ready

The officer of emergency planning has produced a booklet entitled Be Winter-Ready, which includes advice tailored specifically for farmers. The booklet is available at <http://winter-ready.ie>.