**Silage safety reminder for farmers**

The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) is reminding farmers to take extra care during the silage season.

Working with silage is a potentially dangerous time, particularly as high-powered machinery is being operated at speed.

There are other factors which also increase the chance of an accident occurring. These include, fatigue due to long working hours, poor weather and difficult ground conditions. However, experience has shown there are a number of safety measures around key areas that will help make silage time safer.

**Children**

No child under the age of 13 should ever be carried in the cab of any machine involved in making silage.

Contractors must not allow children to ride in tractor cabs.??Children should not be allowed to play around the farmyard or fields when silage is being made.

**Machinery safety**

All tractors and other equipment need to be properly maintained and in good condition. Breakdowns, due to poor maintenance can lead to delays, adding extra cost and more pressure to an already busy schedule.

Only competent drivers should be allowed to operate machinery during the silage season and the carrying of passengers should be avoided.

All guards must be in place on all equipment and in particular PTO shafts must be properly guarded.

Blockages, which need to be cleared by hand, should only be carried out when the drive has been switched off and sufficient time has been allowed for the machine to stop completely.

It is essential to remove keys from tractors during maintenance operations.

Approved safety cabs or roll bars must be fitted on all tractors.

Take care when driving on the public road and watch out for other road users especially when entering or leaving fields or yards.

Keep all lights and indicators in working order.

**Silo safety**

Silos must never be overfilled as this greatly increases the chance of a tractor or loading shovel overturning when filling or rolling a silo.

No-one should go underneath a silage cover once it has been put in place. The fermenting grass uses up the oxygen in the air under the cover very quickly. Anyone going under the cover risks rapid death due to asphyxiation.

On open silos, with earth embankments, the sides and ends of the silage should be sloped off at a safe angle (less than 45 degrees). On other silos where machines and their drivers can drop 600mm (2 feet) or more, strong front end barriers and guide rails are required.

Silos with walls should never be filled above the top of the wall. If overfilled the guard rail will no longer be effective and will increase the risk of a machine overturning.

Excessive filling will overload walls and increase the risk to the operators of machinery.

**Electricity**

Be particularly careful when working near overhead power lines.

If you use a contractor for silage making, inform them of the location of any overhead lines which you feel may impact on large machinery.

Remember, self-propelled forage harvesters need a lot of headroom, as do large trailers when tipped in the yard.

If in doubt about the height of overhead power lines and suitable clearance distances consult with Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE).

To find out more about farm safety, visit: [www.hseni.gov.uk/farm-safety](https://www.hseni.gov.uk/topic/farm-safety) or call the HSENI helpline on: 0800 0320

*Ruth McKane*

*Administration Assistant*

Clogher Diocesan Office

St. Macartin's Cathedral Hall

Hall's Lane

Enniskillen

Co. Fermanagh

N. Ireland

BT74 7DR

Tel: 028 66347879

Email: admin@clogher.anglican.org

Website: www.clogher.anglican.org