Safety Culture

Safety is more than a set of skills or special equipment; it is a culture. The word 'culture' refers to the beliefs, practices, and attitudes in a workplace that influence behavior. Think about what influences your behavior.

In agriculture, forestry, and fishing (AFF) operations, safety is occasionally taken for granted. A certain amount of risk is thought to be part of the job and unavoidable. Workers frequently by-pass safety features and procedures to save a few seconds and get back to work quickly. However, short cuts can have disastrous consequences. For example, if a tractor operator does not turn the equipment off before working on it, he/she can be injured or even killed by rapidly moving parts like the PTO. Practicing safety requires time and money, but injuries and fatalities can be far more costly. According to OHSA, "developing strong safety cultures have the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process."

To get started, AFF operations could post safety reminders and warning signs (Check out http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/agriculture/). As the culture progresses, businesses can identify and address physical hazards, develop safety recognition programs, create safety committees, and start incentive programs. If you are self-employed or manage a small work group, consider what is at stake. If you are injured, who will do the work? If someone on your operation is injured, who will pay their medical bills? How will the media portray the incident? Be your own advocate and research best safety practices. Free resources are available through the SW Ag Center (www.swagcenter.org), The National Ag Safety Database (http://nasdonline.org/browse/238/safety-programming.html), and even You Tube.

"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands" -Thomas Jefferson

References

http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/mod4_factsheets_culture.html