

First Aid Kits Are Vital

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When an emergency occurs, one of the first things you will need is a first aid kit. Are there first aid kits available in your workplace? How would you care for a worker that was seriously injured if you did not have a first aid kit available? Even if there are first aid kits available, when is the last time someone inspected them and restocked them? Well stocked first aid kits should be placed in major buildings, trucks, tractors or other vehicles, and they should be checked and restocked periodically. Any missing items should be replaced so the kit is ready in case of emergencies. A properly equipped first aid kit will give you the supplies that you need to adequately care for injuries. Everyone should know where the first aid kits are located and they should be readily accessible as well.

You can purchase first aid kits or assemble them yourself from household items and items you can get at drug stores. A small, home sized first aid kit may not be adequate for use on a farm where the potential for very traumatic injuries is always possible. A properly equipped first aid kit for a farm should include the following:

- Latex or vinyl gloves, one pair each of extra large, large and medium. Gloves should be right on the top or the first thing you see when you open the first aid kit. Wearing gloves will protect you from contaminated body fluids.
- Four Triangular bandages with 36" sides (cravats), could be made from sheets. These can be used to make slings for broken limbs. Safety pins could be kept with this.
- Sterile compresses, 18 assorted sizes, six 4" X 4", six 3" X 3" and six 2" X 2". These are used to control bleeding. Direct pressure on the wound and elevation can stop most bleeding.
- One large 12" X 30" dressing in case of very large wounds.
- Two packs of 2" stretch bandage material
- Antiseptic, six antiseptic swabs and six alcohol swabs
- Two cold packs
- Twelve band aids
- One roll of adhesive tape or medical tape, one or two inch wide.
- Three small packets of sugar for diabetic emergencies.
- Four tongue depressors, can be used for finger splints.
- One SAM Splint, a new flexible style of splint that can be bent to form any needed shape.
- Amputation preservation kit that consists of plastic bags, one large garbage bag, and four kitchen sized bags.
- Pocket mask for performing CPR.
- Stainless steel bandage scissors that can cut through heavy material such as denim.
- A basic first aid manual.

First aid kits will not make any difference if you do not know how to use them. Being trained in first aid could make the difference and save the victim's life. In an emergency situation, try to stay calm and not panic. As a first responder, you can help the victim a lot by being calm and in control of the situation. Being trained in first aid and CPR will help you with this by preparing you for emergencies before they occur.

In an emergency, one of the first things to do is call 911 quickly. You need to get emergency medical services to the victim as soon as possible. If there are other people with you, one person should notify 911 and keep one person near the scene helping the victim. If you are alone with the victim, call 911 right away and then tend to the victim while help is on the way. The person making the emergency call will be asked questions about the incident from the 911 dispatcher. Next to all phones there should be a list of emergency contact numbers and directions to the farm. If you use cell phones, this information could be printed on a wallet card. This should be in Spanish also, if you have Spanish speaking workers. This information can help facilitate the call to EMS. Never hang up until the dispatcher tells you to. Posting people near roadways to direct rescuers to victims in remote locations is also a big help and can save precious time.

Before you rush in to assist the victim, make sure the scene is safe first. First, assess what might have caused the incident. Look out for live wires or electrical hazards, toxic atmospheres, leaking gasoline, large animals, or unstable equipment such as an overturned tractor, that could roll or fall onto you. Never move an injured person unless they are in an immediately life threatening situation such as a fire or a possible explosion. Moving an injured person could cause further damage if they have a spinal or neck injury. If the scene is safe, bring the first aid kit and check the victim to see if they are breathing. Verbally ask them if they are okay and to see if they are conscious. Check their mouth and throat for blockages. The most important thing to do is to open the airway. If they are still not breathing, you must start CPR as soon as possible. If they are breathing, your next step is to look for and control any bleeding that is present.

Plan and prepare for emergencies before they happen. NYCAMH now offers CPR and First Aid training for certification through the American Heart Association. These services are available at no cost to farmers, farm workers, and farm families in New York. NYCAMH is available to provide safety training at no cost to agricultural operations in New York. If you would like to schedule an on-farm safety training session, or a farm safety survey, contact me at 800-343-7527, ext 239 or e-mail me at jcarrabba@nycamh.com. NYCAMH, a program of Bassett Healthcare Network, is enhancing agricultural and rural health by preventing and treating occupational injury and illness.