

Informed workers are **KEY** to successful manure management

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What if your farm worker is driving a manure tanker down the road and a hose is leaking? Would that worker know why this is of concern? Do they know what routine maintenance would have prevented it from happening? And what to do when they realize the situation is occurring? When they get to the field, do they know what speed to drive for the correct application rate? Or, do they know not to surface spread near a tile riser?

Farm workers often have the main responsibility of handling and hauling manure. While many producers have spent time and money on a manure plan, whether formal or not, it is of little value unless it is shared with everyone else on the farm. Lack of communication leads to costly mistakes, in both time and money, and can result in harmful situations for the workers and the environment.

Effective training and communication with farm workers does not just happen; it requires a proactive desire by the farm owner. Training needs to be specific to the way manure is stored, handled and hauled on each farm. Do not assume anything. Yes, it is awkward to train your dad, your brother, your spouse and the neighbor who has worked for you for years! But if they were not active in developing the manure plan, they are not up-to-date with today's standards.

Planning steps include identifying who needs training and who will train new employees. Nearly everyone on the farm needs manure management training although probably not the same training. For example, those applying manure to fields will need training on setbacks around tile inlets and surface waters, incorporation timing, application rates, tractor speeds, calibration checks and the importance of accurate records.

Workers who never haul manure, but walk by the storage systems every day, need to be trained on personal safety precautions and operation and maintenance of the storage facilities, equipment, pipes, pumps, shut offs, and emergency procedures.

The final and foremost consideration in keeping workers informed is the farm's leadership. The attitude and approach of the farm management team sets the tone for all workers, hired and family. Consider the comparison of management actions and worker reactions described in the following table.



Don't assume employees know how to handle manure by current standards. Employee training includes a mix of formal and daily interactions.

IF THE BOSS' ATTITUDE IS THIS:	THE LIKELY RESPONSE OF THE WORKER WILL BE:
This is stupid!	This is REALLY stupid!
Do as I say, not as I do!	Do as he says, but only if he is watching!
That neighbor is a jerk!	I'll show the neighbor a thing or two about manure!
This is good enough to get by.	I'll show 'em what we can get away with!
I believe this is important and reflect it with my actions.	I had better pay attention and do as he says because bad decisions will have a negative impact on this farm.

Although these comparisons are just examples of what might occur, the attitudes and actions of the farm manager speak louder than words. 🗣️