# WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING

This module is about the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Industry. This industry is often referred to as Primary Industries. It has been prepared to support teachers develop lessons for students with disabilities who will be undertaking work experience in this industry. The module provides information on occupational health and safety for this industry.

While undertaking work experience, students learn primarily through observing and assisting with simple tasks. They **must NOT** undertake activities that require extensive training or experience, or expose them, or others in the workplace, to unreasonable risks to health and safety.

Before commencing preparation of students with disabilities for work experience, teachers should review the Occupational Health and Safety requirements as outlined in the Work Experience Manual for Victorian Secondary Schools.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/work/wemanualrev.pdf>

## Key messages:

* Work experience is about observing the world of work in action.
* Students on work experience must be under supervision at all times.
* Students must complete A Job Well Done modules before undertaking work experience.

## General Information

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry includes:

* work in growing crops (fruit and vegetables)
* raising animals
* growing, collecting and selling timber
* catching fish to sell.

Examples of where people work include farms, forests and on fishing boats. The jobs are mostly outdoors on the land, on farms and in forests, or fishing at sea.

Many people are employed in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. Employment can be full-time, part-time, casual and seasonal. Seasonal work is short term work such as picking fruits on a farm in summer time. The industry provides about 3% of employment in Australia[[1]](#footnote-1).

## Jobs in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Industry

* Agricultural and Forestry Scientist
* Crop Farmer
* Livestock Farmer
* Agricultural and forestry worker
* Fisherman
* Forestry and Logging worker
* Salesperson
* Deck and Fishing hand.

**Further information on the types of occupations in this industry can be found on Job Outlook -** <https://joboutlook.gov.au/Default.aspx>

## What can students do to stay safe at work in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry?

Injuries can happen in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry if care is not taken. Students must follow work instructions safely and **MUST NOT** put themselves or others at risk.

To stay safe in the workplace students with disabilities must:

* be under supervision at all times
* have proper training before undertaking tasks
* speak to their supervisor if they are unsure of how to perform a task safely
* be familiar with what to do in an emergency and who to call
* not operate machinery or equipment.

## Lifting and moving Items (Manual Handling)

Manual handling is a large part of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. Manual handling is work that involves carrying, pushing, pulling, lifting, or moving something. Examples include moving bags of seeds or fertiliser, moving crates of fruit, vegetables or fish, loading and unloading a truck or moving animals.

To stay safe students need to:

* have clear instructions from their supervisor on how to be safe at work
* know the proper lifting procedure
* never lift heavy objects
* take rest breaks to prevent muscle strain and feeling tired
* speak to their supervisor if they are unsure of how to do a task safely
* know how to use a trolley to move large items.

## Machinery and Equipment

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** use machinery or equipment as outlined in the Work Experience Manual. Please note that the list in the manual is not exhaustive and students must **never** use any machinery or equipment that:

* pose an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the student, or
* require extensive training or experience to use safely.

There are many types of machinery and equipment in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry.

Students will be able to observe these machines in action. They may see harvesting machinery on a farm, chainsaws and power tools, irrigation machines for watering crops, seed drills, mowers and machines used to harvest grains.

Vehicles are also used in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. Trucks are used for transporting animals, fruit and vegetables and equipment. Crop dusters are small planes which spray the plants with fertiliser and insect repellent. Fishing boats are used on the water.

## Fatigue

Fatigue (feeling very tired) can affect how people work. It can make workers less focused, slow them down or even cause them to fall asleep. A person can suffer from fatigue in the Retail Trade industry if they must stand up for a long time.

To be safe students need to:

* Take regular rest breaks during the work day and sit down when they can
* Wear comfortable shoes
* Make sure they have a good night’s sleep
* Tell their supervisor if they feel very tired and cannot work.

## Tractors

A tractor is a powerful motor vehicle with large rear wheels which is used on farms for carrying equipment and trailers. Tractors are also used for digging and planting crops on the land.

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** use or ride on a tractor.

**Agricultural Bikes**

Agricultural bikes are motorbikes which are used for farm work in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. The motorbikes have two, three or four wheels and they are called quadbikes or “all-terrain vehicles” (ATVs).

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** ride on any motorbikes or quadbikes.

## Silos

A silo is a tall tower which is used for bulk storage of grains such as wheat and rice, animal food or woodchips. Silos are used in the Agriculture industry on farms and they can be very dangerous. Students may observe silos while on work experience placement.

Students undertaking work experience are **NOT** permitted to climb on or enter a silo.

## Poisons and Dangerous Materials

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** handle chemicals or poisons.

Poisons and dangerous materials are different chemicals that are often used in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. Poisons are often called Hazardous Substances. Common examples of these are pesticides used for killing insects, herbicides used for unwanted plants, animal medications, petrol and cleaning products.

Poisons and dangerous materials must have signs and labels on the container or boxes to show they can cause serious injuries.

## Animal diseases (Zoonosis)

In the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry, people work with many animals. Examples of jobs with animals are farm workers, shearers who cut the wool off sheep, livestock handlers who transport animals, fishing and veterinary workers.

Zoonosis is a type of disease which passes from an animal or insect to a human. The disease can make people sick with muscle pains, headaches, fever and some illnesses can be much more serious.

To stay safe students need to:

* have training from their supervisor about how to work safely with animals while on work experience
* practice good personal hygiene, learn how to wash hands and arms after touching animals in the workplace
* ask their supervisor if they are unsure on how to do a simple task
* tell their supervisor if they feel unwell after working with animals.

## Protection from the weather

Students on work experience in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry are likely to work outside in hot or cold weather. This can include in environment such as farms, boats or parks/forests.

Students need to ensure that they are protected from the sun at all times. Possible health risks include:

* dehydration
* sunburn
* swollen eyes sensitive to bright light
* heat stress - signs of heat stress include tiredness, irritability, inattention and muscular cramps
* heat stroke - heat stroke is not common but can happen if adequate care is not taken. A person suffering from heat stroke will stop sweating and body temperature will be high. Skin will be hot and dry. Confusion and loss of consciousness may occur
* hypothermia - prolonged exposure to cold and wet weather conditions.

To stay safe students need to:

* drink lots of water when working outdoors
* take rest breaks in a cool or warm places
* wear, protective clothing such as a shirt with long sleeves and long trousers when in the sun and clothing and footwear that will keep them warm and dry in the cold
* wear sunglasses that meet the Australian standard to protect the eyes
* wear a hat which gives shade to head, neck, face and ears
* wear gloves when it is cold
* apply SPF30+ sunscreen
* avoid staying out in the hot sun or cold weather too long.

## Noise

There are many different noises in a workplace. In the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry noise can come from trucks, tractors, chainsaws, and other machinery.

Loud and non-stop noise in the workplace can cause partial hearing loss, tinnitus which means ringing in the ears, or permanent hearing loss.

To stay safe students need to:

* wear earplugs, supplied by the workplace supervisor or ear muffs when working near loud machinery
* tell their supervisor if noise from the workplace is too loud for them.

## Electricity

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** be asked to do any electrical work or repairs while on work experience.

Machinery and equipment used in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry use electrical power. Examples of electrical equipment are computers in a warehouse, electric tools, battery chargers and forklift chargers.

Damaged electrical cords, faulty equipment, stretched cords and water leaking onto electrical equipment can be very unsafe. Injuries from electricity includes electric shock.

To stay safe students need to:

* always follow clear instructions from their supervisor
* make sure they do not use machinery or tools, computers are permitted
* speak to their supervisor if they are unsure about a task.

## What can your employer do to make the workplace safe?

The Occupational Health and Safety Act is a written law to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people at work. The employer is responsible for the safety of all employees and must provide a high standard of health and safety at their workplace.

To make the workplace safe, employers must:

* be aware of the laws and regulations and follow these laws to protect their employees
* supervise work experience students, or have another qualified employee supervise work experience students at all times
* provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is any equipment used or worn to keep employees safe in the workplace. PPE includes safety shoes, earplugs, goggles, hard hats, high visibility clothing, face masks, gloves and sunscreen
* provide training for the simple tasks students undertake while on work experience.

### More information about the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry is located at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/students/beyond/Pages/primaryindustrymodule.aspx>.

### Agriculture Victoria

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/fisheries>

### Associations, peak bodies and government organisations

<https://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-and-careers/plan-your-career/industry-profiles/agriculture-forestry-fishing>

### Department of Agriculture and Water Resources ABARES

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/aboutmyregion/vic#forestry-sector>

### Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry>

### Victorian Association of Forest Industries

<http://www.vafi.org.au/>

### safe@work

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/students/beyond/Pages/swguide.aspx?Redirect=1>

### Workplace Learning Toolbox

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/work/Pages/teachers.aspx#link39>

1. <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/IndustryInformation/AgricultureForestryandFishing> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)