

Production Pointers

By Charlie McKenzie and Derek Widman

A common issue we see in swine facilities today is that farm employees are so focused on ensuring the health, well-being, and safety of the animals that they will forego personal safety. Therefore, it is always a good idea to have safety meetings occur not only quarterly, but also to have them after accidents occur.

One of the most important meeting agenda items is to update emergency contact information for each employee. Some farms are not particular on who is listed and employees might list immediate family, relatives, friends, and boy/girlfriends. As life progresses, phone numbers and addresses may change and the emergency contact may need to be re-evaluated. The emergency contacts should be reviewed with the individual employees on a quarterly basis to ensure accuracy, but also to ensure that they are the proper person to contact. It is also a good idea to remind employees to list people who are in close proximity in case of emergency situations. We also recommend employees list at least two emergency contacts to increase the likelihood of reaching someone.

Finally, another item to review at safety meetings is the farm's safety rules. Safety rules may include:

- 1.) No running in walkways.
- 2.) No jumping over fences too high to be stepped over, instead open them up.
- 3.) Safety glasses must be worn during specified activities.
- 4.) Ear protection must be worn during specified activities.
- 5.) Employees must have a sorting panel within arm's reach during any animal movement.

Each farm must develop a list of basic safety measures and then develop it further to meet their own farm's conditions. We have had great success in including employees in the development of this list. After a safety meeting, we will ask employees to provide us with one new safety rule by the next meeting. Not only does this get the employees to buy into the safety program, but it also keeps safety on their mind as they are continually looking for ways to keep the farm staff safe and the animals as well.

Although this is just a short list of pointers that we use in assisting farms to develop their own SOPs, there are many more. If you are looking into this option for your farms, please feel free to contact us at charlie.mckenzie@babcockgenetics.com or derek@babcockgenetics.com, and we can assist you in developing your own SOPs.