



SAFETY ALERT

Tractor Dismount Injury

Name:

Date Read:

WHAT HAPPENED

An experienced arable farmer was stepping out of his tractor to shift some irrigation. Because he was working with water, he was wearing standard gumboots. Being in a rush to get the job done, he took a shortcut: instead of using the tractor steps, he stood on the front wheel and jumped down from the cab. He landed on uneven ground, rolling his ankle and chipping a small bone. As a result of the injury, he was off work for three weeks, followed by another three weeks of rehabilitation where he could only manage limited tasks. While ACC cover provided some financial help, finding skilled relief labour at short notice to keep the business running proved nearly impossible.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN

Rushing the task was the primary driver, leading the farmer to use the front wheel as a step rather than using the proper tractor steps to climb down safely. Additionally, while gumboots were the only fit-for-purpose footwear choice for irrigation work, they inherently fail to provide ankle support when jumping onto rough terrain. For an owner-operator or a worker on a small farm, an injury like this hits the business the hardest because there are no extra staff members to spread the load. The incident highlights how easily routine tasks can result in prolonged downtime when safety steps are skipped in the name of speed.

KEY LESSONS

- **Always use the steps:** Never use wheels or guards as makeshift steps, and never jump from a tractor cab, quadbike, or any farm machinery. Always use the proper steps and maintain three points of contact until your feet are firmly on the ground.
- **Acknowledge footwear limitations:** Irrigation tasks require gumboots, but they offer zero ankle stability. Because you cannot wear sturdy lace-up boots for every single job, you must take extra care when transitioning from machinery to rough terrain.
- **Slow down and expect the unexpected:** Farm terrain is rarely flat or predictable. Taking an extra five seconds to climb down properly protects your physical health, your family, and your livelihood.
- **Manage fatigue and pressure:** Long hours during peak seasons increase the temptation to take shortcuts. Recognise when rushing is compromising your safety judgment, and consciously force yourself to follow standard routines.



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