



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION**

## **Colorado State University Extension Golden Plains Area Extension**

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### **On Farm Communication**

(Julesburg, Colo.)

#### **Agronomy Agent's Corner #15**

Todd Ballard

#### **On Farm Communication**

Communication on the farm limits a wide range of errors. Everyone working with you needs to know which operations are complete and what the next priority is on the schedule. Distribution of standard operating procedures (SOPs) builds an understanding of expectations. Safety is improved by the display of do not enter signs during the restricted re-entry interval. Learning about each employee's skills and interests leads to improved retention.

Displaying a schedule of anticipated tasks for the season allows every member of your farm's team know when to expect each operation. Checking off tasks as they are completed prevents the costs associated with starting to duplicate efforts. This can be accomplished either with modern tools such as shared calendars on email applications or with physical calendars sitting next to equipment. Loading a combine on a trailer to drive to a field and find out another member of your family has already harvested the field costs several hours of wasted labor and mileage on your truck.

SOPs can be as generic as who is lead for each task or as specific as a summary of a chemical label. At least one person on the farm should be the go-to person for precision software, equipment maintenance and operation, accounting, biology-based decisions, etc.... It is important for everyone to know who to direct each question. On the specific end of the SOP spectrum is things like harvesting sequence and chemical use. Creating a detailed harvest sequence plan promotes a decrease in losses to shattering and eliminates attempts to harvest before black layering has occurred. Chemical use SOPs will show the 3Rs of stewardship. The time, the right place, and the right rate will be described. Also, safety and environmental concerns/regulations will be listed.

Your farm employees may be as few as a single owner operator or as many as a large corporation. Knowledge of employee's interest is universally important to keep improving your business. If your daughter wants to try growing sorghum, then plant a few acres of it. You may like the results, find a way to improve your current production practices, or pique her interest in experimentation. If your son prefers harvesting to planting, assign him the task of planning corn harvest while you are planting wheat. If your mechanics are interested in finance, show him the net sales if marketing goes well or poorly each year. Following through with any of these actions

will let employees know that you are interested in their general wellbeing and improve the chance of them making a long-term contribution to your farm.

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