What to check in your fall response plan for farms, warehouses and field sites

Why a fall response plan matters for remote and hazardous sites

When someone works alone on a farm, in a warehouse or at a field site, a fall can become a serious incident within minutes. The difference between a quick recovery and a prolonged emergency often comes down to how fast the fall is detected and how reliably help is called. An automatic fall alert system can handle that first critical step, but the equipment alone is not enough. You also need a response checklist that matches the realities of your work environment.

For sites where workers are out of sight of each other, falls might happen in a silo, a cold store aisle, a loading dock or a paddock. The person may be unable to move or call out. That is why response planning should cover detection, communication and escalation. The checklist below focuses on the practical checks that help you avoid gaps in that chain.

Check your detection method matches the work

An automatic fall alert typically uses sensors such as impact detectors, tilt monitors and no-motion timers. But not every sensor suits every task. On a farm, a worker might be climbing a ladder into a grain bin, where a sudden stop could trigger the alert. In a warehouse, someone might be operating a forklift and a fall from the seat is different from a fall on foot. Check that your system's fall detection logic can tell the difference between a genuine incident and a routine movement such as bending or sitting down.

Some devices offer a pre-alert stage: a few seconds where the user can cancel the alarm if it was a false trigger. This reduces nuisance calls while still providing fast escalation when needed. Make sure your response checklist accounts for that pre-alert window and that workers know how to cancel it. Otherwise, a false alarm can lead to a wasted response and, over time, a culture of ignoring alerts.



Confirm the alert delay is appropriate

An automatic fall alert is not instant by default. Most systems include a short delay - typically a few seconds - to avoid triggering on a hard step or a bump. The delay works well on hard surfaces where an impact is sharp. On softer ground like mud, hay or rubber matting, the impact force may be lower and the system might not detect a fall at all. Check the sensitivity settings for your specific site conditions. If the device uses a no-motion sensor as a backup, the delay before that alarm activates may be longer. That length matters: a delay that is too long in a hazardous area can mean the difference between a quick rescue and a serious outcome.

Test the detection on site, not just in the office

Drop tests and tilt tests should be run in the actual work areas. A warehouse aisle with concrete flooring behaves differently from a field with long grass. The same device might trigger reliably on one surface and miss on another. Run a few deliberate falls (with a soft landing mat if needed) or use the manufacturer's test mode to verify coverage. Keep a record of where the device works and where it does not, and adjust the settings or the assignment of devices accordingly.

Map the communication chain after an alert

Once the automatic fall alert is sent, someone must receive it and act. That could be a site supervisor, a security desk or a monitoring service. The response checklist should list who gets the alert first, what they do next and how they confirm the worker's status. On a farm, the

person receiving the alert might be the farm manager, who then calls emergency services. In a large warehouse, it might be the shift leader who radios the nearest colleague.

If the worker does not respond to a check-in call, the responder needs a clear escalation path. That path should include a time limit for reaching the worker and a decision point for calling emergency services. Without that, a fall alert can sit in an inbox or on a screen while the worker waits. loneworkeralarms.co.nz provides wearable alarms that combine fall detection with two-way voice communication, which can help the responder assess the situation before dispatching help.

Review the false alarm history regularly

False alarms are the enemy of a good response plan. If workers see the system triggering too often on normal movements, they may start to ignore it or disable it. Review the alert log every month. Look for patterns: is the device triggering when the worker leans into a shelf, or when they drive over a bump in a utility vehicle? Adjust the sensitivity or change the placement of the device. Some devices allow you to set a lower impact threshold or a longer pre-alert window for specific tasks. Use that flexibility.

Train workers on what to do when an alert sounds

The checklist is only useful if everyone knows their role. Run a short drill every quarter where a worker simulates a fall and the rest of the team follows the response procedure. Time the response from alert to arrival. If the response takes longer than your target, identify the bottleneck. It might be that the person receiving the alert does not know the exact location, or that the site map is out of date. Fix that before it becomes a real problem.



Check the device's battery and signal coverage

An automatic fall alert system is only as good as its power and connectivity. On a farm or field site, the device might rely on cellular networks or satellite links. Check the signal strength at every location where the worker might be. A metal building like a warehouse can block or weaken the signal. A remote paddock might have no coverage at all. If the device uses a rechargeable battery, set a reminder for weekly charging. For disposable batteries, check the expected life and replace them on schedule.

A device that loses power or signal cannot send an alert. That is why the response checklist should include a daily pre-start check: turn the device on, confirm the signal indicator shows a connection, and verify the battery level. If the device has a test call function, use it before the

shift begins. It takes thirty seconds and saves the headache of discovering a dead unit after an incident.

Plan for situations where the worker cannot cancel the pre-alert

Most fall detection systems give the worker a few seconds to cancel a false alarm. But what if the worker is conscious but injured and cannot reach the cancel button? The system should then escalate automatically after the pre-alert expires. Your response checklist should assume that any uncancelled pre-alert is a real incident. Do not train workers to wait for a second signal before responding. The first uncancelled alert should trigger the full response.

Some devices also include a man down alert that activates when the device is tilted for a set period. That is useful when a worker falls and lies still. But if the worker is moving after the fall, the tilt sensor may not trigger. In that case, the no-motion timer becomes the backup. Make sure your checklist covers both scenarios: immediate impact and delayed detection from lack of movement.

Keep the response plan simple and accessible

A checklist that lives in a binder in the office is not helpful when the responder is in the field. Print a laminated card with the key steps and attach it to the worker's vehicle or to the device itself. Include the emergency contact numbers, the location coordinates of the site and the procedure for calling for help. The card should fit in a pocket or be stored in the same pouch as the device.



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For sites with multiple shifts, make sure each shift leader has a copy and knows how to use the monitoring portal or app. If the system sends alerts to a phone, the phone should stay with the responder during the shift, not left in a locker. A little planning up front can turn a confusing moment into a calm, efficient response.

The goal is to make the automatic fall alert a reliable safety net, not a source of confusion. By checking the detection settings, the communication chain, the battery and signal, and the false alarm history, you create a system that works when it needs to. A resource like **loneworkeralarms.co.nz** can help with the hardware and the setup, but the response plan is something you build with your own team for your own site conditions. That is where the real safety improvement comes from.