

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Farm Dump Truck & Trailer Safety



There are three situations that present a potential for a debilitating or fatal injury involving an on-farm use of larger dump trucks and/or trailers:

#1 – Trucks or trailers tipping over while unloading loads. There are a variety of reasons that can cause this to happen, and they will be discussed later.

#2 – A person working under a raised dump bed or trailer bed (without thinking) to physically block the bed from dropping unexpectedly.

#3 – The truck or trailer coming in contact with overhead power lines, and the driver or a bystander gets electrocuted. This usually happens as the driver is pulling off with the bed raised and forgetting to lower it.

**All three of these have one thing in common: CARELESSNESS!** Carelessness can result in a person getting electrocuted or even crushed to death in a split second. There have been recorded accidents of these types of incidents, but to my knowledge we haven't had one in Mississippi.

## **RAISED DUMP BED HAZARDS:**

- **Instability** – A dump bed or trailer bed gets unstable as it is elevated, especially if the ground is unlevel. The greater the length of the bed or the greater the height of the slope, the greater the potential of a flip over. When raising the bed, it is important to keep the load between the rails, ideally in the center. Even if the ground is flat, a small slope can be created by soft dirt or low tire pressure. Any of these things can cause a tip over.

Wind, off-center loads, load shifting from quick turns or jack-knifing can happen, and with staying focused, they can usually be avoided. Another driver stopping abruptly in front of your vehicle may cause a tip over and this is an area where you might not have complete control.

- **Unexpected Bed Lowering** – Workers can be crushed to death instantly by dump beds dropping unexpectedly. I had a friend in Tennessee killed on his farm with a grain bed that dropped instantly. It was ruled as a result of hydraulic leakage from the cylinder and the hoses. A person can put himself in "harm's way" by careless actions that he might have had control over, if he had taken the safety precautions. Beds should be equipped with a blocking arm to prevent this. Some beds are equipped with this safety feature.

- Contact with overhead wires – Overhead power lines are always a potential hazard on the farm. We hear sometimes of grain elevators and augers causing electrical shocks and raised dump beds creating the same hazard. These incidents happen because the operator is in a hurry, impatient or just plain forgets. He or she may be protected if they remain in the cab, but if they try to get out and make contact with the ground, they will be electrocuted. Also, if a bystander or co-worker touches the body of the vehicle, they too might get electrocuted.
- **Other Possible Hazards** – Crushed fingers or limbs can occur while working on tailgate latches or hinges. Slips, trips or falls can also happen by climbing up or off a dump bed or trailer. Shear line hazards can occur if the bed or trailer runs too close to ditch banks or collapsing shoulders and overturns.

## **CONTROLLING AND ELIMINATING HAZARDS:**

### **Loading and unloading –**

- Be sure that your load is evenly distributed.
- Avoid overloading. Know how to calculate your load.
- Materials react differently. With materials that react slowly, load less.
- Double check the tailgate to be sure that it is unlocked before raising the bed.
- Clear the area of other vehicles and by-standers before unloading.
- Lower the bed completely before pulling away from the load.

### **Maintenance –**

- Always block the bed with an approved device before you place yourself between the bed and the frame.
- Check the tire pressure daily.
- Inspect the cylinder, fittings, hoses and suspension system on a regular basis. Make the repairs as needed.
- Lubricate all the working parts on a scheduled basis.

Operators or drivers should be trained on handling, maintenance, and inspection of the dump beds and trailers. They should know and use hand signals and the safety procedures for two people handling the unloading operations.

***LIFE DIDN'T START WITH AN ACCIDENT  
PLEASE !***

***DON'T LET IT END WITH ONE!!***

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***FORGET THE HEARSE WITH  
SAFETY FIRST!!***

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Excerpts: [www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs](http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs).

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