



# MAFES Dawg Tracks

July 25, 2011



Grain Bin Safety



Remember when we were told that eating grilled foods cooked over charcoal could kill you. The point was well taken, but the “hitch” was the requirement that you would need to eat charcoal grilled foods seven days each week for something like 25 years before it could actually affect you.

The same result can happen around the farm if we fail to follow the basic safety guidelines with equipment, but it won't take years for a farm accident to happen. Grain storage is increasing on our support farms as it is with the whole Mississippi agriculture sector. I feel it is time to review and pass on information regarding grain bin safety.

According to Dr. Bill Field, chief agronomist from Purdue University, there have been 46 entrapments through October, 2010. This was the most since 1993 when there were 42 entrapment cases recorded. In 2010, there were 25 fatalities with 33 coming from farms and 13 from commercial grain facilities. Dr. Field further stated that all grain-related accidents do not get recorded; if so, this number could be 20 to 30 percent higher. Former Mississippi State University Extension agriculture engineer, Herb Willcutt, stated in the November, 2002 issue of Southern Farm Press examples of two accidents that had occurred here in Mississippi during the year of 2002.

**February, 2002** - A farmer in Pontotoc County, MS entered one of his grain bins, apparently with the unloading equipment operating and became entrapped. He made several calls on his cell phone to 9-1-1 to no avail. He died of suffocation. He had gone to the top of the bin, possibly to level the grain, and was sucked down into the grain. This happened about 10:00 am in the morning, and it was very close to 4:00 pm before they were able to extract his body.

**September, 2002** - A Bolivar County, MS farmer was crushed while cleaning out a grain pit when another employee of the farm accidentally drove a backhoe into the pit. According to the Bolivar County Sheriff, the backhoe driver accidentally hit the accelerator instead of the brake, and the tractor jumped into the loading pit with the victim.

## **USING A BACKHOE OR SIMILAR TYPES OF EQUIPMENT-**

- Anytime a boom is used or being moved, no one should be near the area where they could come in contact the equipment.
- When you enter a confined space with the potential of the bottom falling out from under you, you need not start without having a rescue harness system to keep you from being sucked down into the grain.
- Never enter a grain bind with the unloading equipment running.
- Never enter a bin that has grain partially removed without checking for cavities in the bin.
- Never enter a bin without proper ventilation. Run the fan for several hours before you enter the bin to remove dust and gases that are produced by out-of-condition grain. The dust and gases have the potential to be deadly.

## **PREVENTIVE SAFETY SUGGESTIONS FROM THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL-**

- ✓ Label all the grain bins with warnings of entrapment hazards.
- ✓ Lock all entrances to grain handling areas to keep children and bystanders out.
- ✓ Install ladders inside all the grain bins.
- ✓ Do not enter grain bins that are being loaded or unloaded. Flowing grain can trap and suffocate you in seconds.
- ✓ In situations where it is necessary to enter a grain bin, always shut and lock the power before you enter. Use a safety harness system and designate a couple of workers to stand outside the bin with the safety rope in case of an emergency.
- ✓ When working around grain always wear a dust-filtering respirator, as there is always the possibility of dust and mold.
- ✓ Always wear approved ear protection to offset the sounds of dryers, fans and other aeration equipment. Be cautious of grain that is in bad condition. Crusted grain may have cavities below the surface that can collapse and cause entanglement and suffocation.
- ✓ Keep bystanders and children away from grain bins and grain handling equipment.

Remember that flowing grain is the primary cause of grain-bin related accidents, but there are other factors to be aware of such as high voltage electric lines, ladders, and catwalks.

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1/28/2011*