

IDOA And State Fire Marshal Encourage Farmers To Practice Safety While Working In Grain Bins

February 26 2022 7:15 AM



SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), along with the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) are encouraging Illinois farmers to set aside time to recognize Grain Bin Safety Week from February 20-26 and review safety practices while working in and around grain bins.

Based on Purdue University's 2020 Summary of U.S. Agricultural Confined Space-Related Injuries and Fatalities (ACSRIF) report, the U.S. documented 35 grain entrapment cases. The 35 cases represent an almost 8 percent decline in grain entrapments from 2019, when 38 entrapments were recorded. The total number of fatal and non-fatal entrapments is the second highest in the past six years. In 2020, Illinois Fire Departments responded to a nation leading 12 rescue incidents at Illinois grain bins /elevators, according to National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data.

“Often times we become complacent when doing tasks we have done a thousand times and for farmers that often means working in and around grain bins,” **said IDOA Director, Jerry Costello II.** “Unfortunately, problems involving flowing grain can snowball quickly. That’s why it’s important to set aside time to go over safety measures, to prepare farmers for a potential grain bin emergency.”

“Fire departments and districts continue to train so they are ready to aid and assist in the event of a grain entrapment,” **said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.** “In some rural areas, response times are increased due to the rural nature of these facilities, which makes it vitally important that farmers don’t take any unnecessary risks and use safe practices.”

University of Illinois Extension suggests whenever possible, don't enter a grain bin. If you must enter the bin, as a farm owner/operator you should:

- Break up crusted grain from the outside of the bin with a long pole. When using a pole, check to see that it doesn't come into contact with electric lines.
- Wear a harness attached to a properly secured rope.
- Stay near the outer wall of the bin and keep walking if the grain should start to flow. Get to the bin ladder or safety rope as quickly as possible.
- Have another person, preferably two people, outside the bin who can help if you become entrapped. These people should be trained in rescue procedures and should know and follow safety procedures for entering the confined space.
- Grain fines and dust may cause difficulty in breathing. Anyone working in a grain bin, especially for the purpose of cleaning the bin, should wear an appropriate dust filter or filter respirator.
- Stay out of grain bins, wagons and grain trucks when unloading equipment is running.
- If it is necessary to enter the bin, remember to shut off the power to augers and fans. It is a good idea to lock out any unloading equipment before you enter a bin to prevent someone from unintentionally starting the equipment while you are in the bin.
- Children should not be allowed to play in or around grain bins, wagons or truck beds.
- Where possible, ladders should be installed inside grain bins to for an emergency exit. Ladders are easier to locate inside a dusty bin if there are brightly painted stripes just above or behind the ladder.

Farm workers are required to attend training as a reminder to utilize the best practices while working in and around grain bins. In addition to required training there are several online training resources available:

- The Grain and Feed Association of Illinois at: www.gfai.org
- The Grain Handling and Safety Council at: www.grainsafety.org
- University of Illinois Extension at: <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/agsafety/equipment/grainbinsafety.cfm>