

IDOA And State Fire Marshal Stresses Safety While Farmers Work In Or Around Grain Bins

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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 19-25 and review safety practices while working in and around grain bins.

According to researchers at Purdue University, more than 900 cases of grain engulfment have been reported with a fatality rate of 62% in the past 50 years ending in 2010. In 2010, at least 26 U.S. workers were killed in grain engulfment accidents - the highest number on record. It only takes 4 seconds for a full grown adult to sink to their knees in flowing grain and 20 seconds to be completely buried in flowing grain. Suffocation from engulfment is the leading cause of death in grain bins.

“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.”

“Departments across the state continually train for these types of responses and continue to apply for grants to receive special tools and devices to help with these rescues, said acting Illinois State Fire Marshal Dale Simpson. “In rural areas of Illinois, response times are increased due to the remote nature of these grain bins, which makes it extremely important that farmers follow proper safety measures and don’t take any unnecessary risks.”

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 used 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>