

Grain Bin Safety Week

With on-farm grain storage on the rise—and a record number of grain engulfment deaths across the nation last year—agricultural leaders in Nebraska are placing special emphasis on grain handling safety during Grain Bin Safety Week, February 22-28, 2015. In observance of the week, the Nebraska Corn Board and Nebraska Corn Growers Association are encouraging farmers, grain elevators and other grain handlers to slow down — and take a second for safety while working with grain.

“We feel it is increasingly important to promote grain bin safety awareness and remind all grain handlers of the hazards of working around grain,” said Larry Mussack, farmer from Decatur and president of the Nebraska Corn Growers Association. “With just one misstep or just a moment of distraction, you could find yourself or someone you know in a grain entrapment emergency.”

National statistics show that farming is one of the most dangerous occupations in America. Over the past 50 years, more than 900 cases of grain engulfment have been reported—and the fatality rate is 62 percent. With a 10-inch auger, it takes just 25 seconds for a 6-foot person to be completely buried in grain.

Now in its second year, Grain Bin Safety Week is an annual observance dedicated to increasing the awareness of grain bin safety on farms and commercial grain-handling facilities. The goal of this event is to educate the agricultural community on safe work practices and procedures to help reduce the number of preventable injuries and deaths associated with grain handling and storage.

Here are a few grain bin safety tips to keep in mind when you are working with stored grain:

- Use inspection holes or grain level markers to understand what's happening inside the bin. Use a pole from outside the bin to break up grain bridges.
- You should enter a grain bin only if absolutely necessary. If you must get into the bin, use a body harness secured to the outside of the bin. Have at least two people watching over you as you enter and work inside the bin.
- Use hand signals to communicate—and make sure everyone you're working with knows what those signals are.

These safety tips and more will be emphasized not only during Grain Bin Safety Week, but throughout the year by the Nebraska Corn organizations. A record high yield, combined with an upward trend in on-farm grain storage capacity has experts projecting an even larger number of grain engulfment accidents in 2015.

“Now, more than ever, it is important to take the extra second and follow the safety rules when it comes to working with grain stored in bins,” said Kelly Brunkhorst, executive director of the Nebraska Corn Board. “With on-farm safety being a continued effort at Nebraska Corn, we want both farmers and emergency responders to understand how to avoid grain bin accidents—and how to help someone who does end up in trouble in a grain bin. There is no better time than the present to work together as an agricultural community and help prevent these tragic accidents from occurring.”