

# Grain Safety

Grain entrapment is one of the least understood hazards in today's family farm operations. Within the past three decades, more than 200 farmers or family members have died from grain suffocation in the United States. One-third of those trapped in flowing grain are children. Grain-producing states often report one or two of these preventable deaths every year. There were 22,648 agricultural-related injuries which occurred to children or adolescents under the age of 20 who lived on, worked on, or visited a farm operation in 2001. Nearly two-thirds of all these injuries were classified as non-work-related and the majority happened to males. Most of these injuries were youth that were a part of the farm household. 48 % of the injuries occurred in the Midwest.

With today's high-capacity loading and unloading systems, people are helpless in flowing grain within seconds. Workers also may be trapped in grain when a horizontal bridge of crusted grain collapses or in the avalanche of a vertical grain wall inside a bin.

Countless people have experienced a "close call," that is, they have found themselves either trapped in grain or swept through an outlet in flowing grain. The most common remark of survivors is that they never anticipated the tremendous force of grain. Children, who may be intrigued by flowing grain are at risk. If they choose to investigate this phenomenon, they can be trapped in seconds and suffocate.

**The following are a few rules you may want to implement to prevent your farm family from becoming a tragic statistic due to grain incidents.**

- Always lock all access doors to grain storage structures.
- Lock out power to all types of grain-handling equipment.
- Use the buddy system when you are unloading or loading grain, notifying a second person where you are.
- Never permit children to ride in grain wagons or enter grain storage areas.
- Always know where ALL family members are (especially children) at all times when grain is being loaded, unloaded, moved or otherwise handled.

Awareness and education are vital to the prevention of grain storage related incidents. Iowa State University has produced "Great Grain Harvest," an educational packet which answers many of the real-world questions about the dangers of grain handling. Using math and science principles, kids can learn not only how to stay safe, but they can also learn to teach their younger siblings and older family members how to stay safe around grain.

Farm Safety 4 Just Kids sells the educational packet by Iowa State University Extension, as well as other grain safety educational materials.

