

Manure Storage Risks

Approximately 33,000 youth under 20 years of age were injured on farms in the United States in 1998. This number includes youth working on, living on, visiting, and accompanying an employed parent. 34% of these youth were under the age of 10, 39% were between 10 and 15, and 27% were 16 to 19 years of age. Most injuries were to males 26.

Manure on farms can pose more problems than just the offensive odors that we so often hear about. Dangers lurk in the manure itself and how it's stored.

Gases and odors may be a nuisance for many livestock producers and those that live nearby, but it can also lead to life-threatening dangers in confinement and manure pits. Every year there are incidents reported in which someone is overcome by deadly manure gases. These incidents have resulted in several deaths and many more illnesses caused by exposure to poisonous gases.



A confined-space hazard can often claim multiple lives. Manure pits can be oxygen-deficient, toxic, and explosive. Economic losses can occur from animals that die from the gases. It is difficult to know when air quality problems will occur. The best precaution is to understand the sources of air quality problems, and what to do to reduce or eliminate them.

To prevent exposure to the dangers of manure gas everyone in the family should follow these rules:

- Never enter a manure pit.
- Label manure pits and manure storage areas to warn of the hazards.
- Obtain and use monitoring equipment to determine the level of gases present.
- If entrance is necessary, a self-contained breathing apparatus must be worn by someone trained in its use. A safety harness should be worn and monitoring should continue while someone is in the manure storage area.
- Never enter a building when manure is being agitated (mixed) for removal.
- Always use maximum building ventilation during manure agitation.
- Be sure manure pit covers are secure and in good repair.
- Be sure all lagoons are adequately fenced.

Never try to rescue someone who is unconscious in a manure storage structure unless you have the proper equipment and knowledge of the situation. Multiple deaths can occur because rescuers succumb to the same gases as the victim. Remember, children who are less knowledgeable than adults may be at the greatest risk. Curiosity can lure children into dangerous situations where they may become the next victim to a deadly gas.

