



Indiana

Department of Labor

Advancing the safety, health and prosperity of Hoosiers in the workplace

MICHAEL R. PENCE, GOVERNOR
Rick J. Ruble, Commissioner

402 West Washington Street, Room W195
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2751

Phone: (317) 232-2655
Fax: (317) 233-3790

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Bob Dittmer
Phone: (317) 234-3793
Email: media@dol.in.gov

Worker Safety in Grain Facilities

INDIANAPOLIS (April 20, 2015) – Following last week’s injury of four employees in a LaPorte County grain elevator explosion, the Indiana Department of Labor reminds employers and employees about grain handling facility hazards and how to prevent occupational injuries and fatalities.

This most recent incident underscores the need for safety procedures for working in grain facilities. The grain handling industry is a high hazard industry where workers can be exposed to serious and life threatening hazards including fires and explosions from grain dust accumulation, suffocation from engulfment and entrapment in grain bins, falls from heights and crushing injuries, and amputations from grain handling equipment.

Grain bins across the U.S. have killed more than 180 people and injured more than 675 since 1980. Grain dust is highly flammable and is the number one cause of grain bin explosions.

“The safety of our farm workers is of paramount importance to our Indiana agriculture industry,” said Commissioner Rick J. Ruble. “Grain handling facilities can be dangerous, and workers must recognize the dangers and take all necessary precautions.”

Employees working in or near grain handling facilities should never work alone. Working with a partner ensures help is always near.

Additionally, employers and employees can reduce the likelihood of worker injury, illness, or death by taking the following precautions:

- **Prevent dust explosions** – Prior to entry, test the air within a bin or silo for the presence of combustible and toxic gases. Make sure there is sufficient oxygen for safe entry.
- **Prevent falls** – Provide all employees with a body harness and lifeline or boatswains chair. Ensure these items are properly secured before entering a grain bin.
- **Prevent electrocution and auger entanglement** – Before grain bin or silo entry, shut down and lock out all equipment power sources. Station an observer outside the bin or silo to monitor and track continuously the employee inside the bin.
- **Prevent engulfment** – Prohibit employees from walking-down the grain or using similar practices to make the grain flow. Prohibit entry into bins or silos underneath a bridging condition or where grain product has built up on side walls. This grain could shift and bury a worker.

Employers and employees are encouraged to learn about safe grain handling procedures and to take the necessary precautions. To learn more about safe grain handling practices, visit <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/grainhandling/evaluation.html>.

For questions about worker safety and health, contact INSafe, the Indiana onsite OSHA consultation program, at insafe@dol.in.gov or (317) 232-2688.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Two potential sidebars follow.

Upon entering the top of a silo or bin:

1. Never work alone during any entry of a silo or bin.
2. Turn off the auger and lock out the shut-off switch.
3. Turn on the aerator.
4. Conduct a pre-use inspection on all rescue equipment. Have all rescue equipment readily available for immediate use.
5. Ensure the silo or grain bin entrant is wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment—dust mask, safety glasses, rescue harness, etc.
6. Ensure all workers are familiar with the communication procedures and within communication distance.
7. Ensure tie off at an adequate anchor point. Make sure there is enough rope to travel up the ladder and into the silo to attach to the harness and employee.
8. Place an employee attendee at the top of the silo or bin and another at the base of the ladder at the anchor point.
9. Never allow slack on the lifeline.
10. In the event of entrapment at or above waist level:
 - a. Train the entrant to cover his or her face with his or her shirt or dust mask.
 - b. Never attempt to rescue the entrapped employee from the top of the bin or silo. Implement Emergency Action Plan procedures.

Entrapment or engulfment procedures:

1. Turn off the auger and lock out the shut-off switch.
 2. Turn on the aerator.
 3. Call 911.
 4. If the victim is within reach, without entering the bin, place a rescue sleeve around the victim. If a rescue sleeve is not available, place any flat, hard surface material (i.e. plywood, sheet metal, etc.) at the face of the victim.
-

About the Indiana Department of Labor:

The mission of the Indiana Department of Labor is to advance the safety, health and prosperity of Hoosiers in the workplace. In order to make significant strides, we emphasize both enforcement and compliance assistance by employers. www.in.gov/dol

###