



Tractor Talks

Grain Bins and Silos

Tips for Talking

- **Plan ahead.** *Be familiar and comfortable with the topic.*
- **Make it relevant.** *Include related tasks and work areas or events.*
- **Involve your workers.** *Ask questions that lead to participation. See suggestions under "Discussion Drivers."*

What went wrong?

May 11, 10:40 a.m.

It was a beautiful spring morning on the farm when Terry Clark was called over to the silo and told there was a problem — cotton seed in one of the silos had stopped flowing. Thinking it was probably due to a bridging (arching) problem, Terry put on a body harness with a retractable lifeline and prepared to enter the silo to help get the seed moving again. Once inside, he removed the harness so a coworker could use it to enter the silo. Soon after Terry removed the belt, the seed bridge collapsed and he was pulled down. Terry was totally engulfed in cotton seed and died of suffocation. ***What went wrong?***

Grain Bins and Silos

Grain bins and silos pose many dangers including the risk of engulfment, suffocation, grain dust exposures, and explosions. If there are grain bins or silos at your job site:

- **Avoid entering a grain bin or silo unless necessary. And you have been trained to enter confined spaces.**
- **Turn off and lock out all powered equipment.**
- **Use a harness and lifeline.** *If entering at or above the level of stored grain use a harness and lifeline and do not remove it until you are safely out.*
- **Test the air using an air meter** — *is there enough oxygen (20.9%) and no toxic and/or flammable gases present?*
- **Do not walk on or "down" the grain to make it flow.**
- **Do not enter without rescue equipment and a rescue-trained observer stationed outside who is in constant contact with you.**
- **Follow all of your employer's confined space entry permit processes and safety precautions.**

Things to Remember...

- Unload grain wagons on a level surface and ensure tractor brakes are in a locked position.
- Workers under 16 years old should never enter grain bins.
- If grain bins and silos have electrical lockout boxes, shut off power during any work inside the bins.
- Wear respiratory protection when working around areas with dust, mold, and silo gases.
- Spoiled grain produces mold spores that can cause irritation and/or allergic reactions.

Discussion Drivers

1. How could Terry's accident have been prevented?
2. Before entering a grain bin or silo, what precautions must be in place?
3. What are some concerns you have about grain bins and silos?

For more information on Grain Bin and Silo Safety visit: www.osha.gov/SLTC/grainhandling/index.html