

Canadian
Agricultural
Safety Week
Mar. 14-20, 2007

FACT SHEET #1

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Auger safety

The auger was a welcomed invention for handling grain, replacing countless hours of toil and backbreaking work. But for all their work-saving attributes, augers have also been the cause of more injuries and deaths to farm workers and children than any other machine for the number of hours used. From lacerations, amputations, and broken bones to electrocutions – these common injuries associated with the use of augers can be prevented with safer working practices and machinery.

“*Protect your moving parts!*” is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on pinch points, crushes, entanglements, and the importance of guarding. The yearlong campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), March 14-20, 2007, by encouraging farmers across Canada to check and repair all the guards and shields on their machinery. The CASW campaign is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

“All auger related incidents are preventable,” said Glen Blahey, CASA Chair. “Be sure that everyone who operates an auger knows and understands the risks that present themselves. It only takes a few minutes of caution to save a lifetime of regret.”

Always leave shields in place. When shields are in place and undamaged, there is much less opportunity to become entangled with moving parts. Likewise, intake screens at the base of the auger help prevent hands and feet from becoming caught between the auger screw and tube. Keep children away from operating grain augers!

Start grain augers safely. A safe auger has a clutch and starter. Some older grain augers are powered by small gasoline engines that don’t have a clutch or starter and are started by pulling on the vee-belt drive – AN EXTREMELY UNSAFE PRACTICE.! This method is a clear invitation to injury resulting from getting caught in the belt and pulley. Augers with this start-up procedure should be retrofitted with a clutch and starter, either rope or electric.

Empty the auger before stopping it. An empty grain auger is always easier to start than a full one. It is also safer. A full or partially full auger may be top-heavy and can flip if moved, causing injury to the operator or bystanders and damage to the machine. Except in emergency situations, always let the auger rattle empty before stopping it.

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Be careful when moving augers. Always look up! Overhead electric power lines are commonly found at many bin sites. When an auger comes in contact with overhead electrical wires and your body or the machine that you are driving completes the circuit to the ground, there is likely to be an electrocution. Always look up when moving grain augers, and whenever possible, have someone else watch the power line clearance.

Adjust grain auger height carefully. There is a limit as to how high a grain auger can safely be raised. Most augers have a track that the upper supports slide on as the height is adjusted. Many augers do not have stops at the ends of the track. When the upper supports come to the end of the track or guide, the auger may come down – fast! Fatal injuries have resulted from this type of situation. Install stops at the ends of your auger’s track if they are not there. Never raise an auger beyond its recommended height – use a longer auger if more height is needed.

Don’t try to grab the crank. If the height-adjustment crank should get out of your grasp while adjusting the auger, do not attempt to stop it or grab for it. LET IT GO! Many broken arms and wrists have resulted from attempts to grab a spinning crank.

Set up carefully and block the wheels. A grain auger can roll or move as it is running and fills with grain. Always secure grain augers in place by placing blocks in front of and behind the wheels to prevent it from moving. Anchor the bottom end of the auger to the ground, too. The auger must be placed on level ground and completely stable if it is to be safe.

Other Precautions. Be sure to wear close fitting clothing when working near a grain auger. Loose, floppy clothing and long bootlaces will easily become entangled in rotating parts. Entangled clothing will pull the body into the moving machinery and severe injury will result.

Limit the number of people around the auger when in use. Only those who are essential to the job should be there – no visitors or bystanders

Always stop the machinery when debris (straw, chaff, etc.) begins to be a problem. Never use your hands or feet to remove debris from moving machinery.

Grain augers are very useful, labour-saving machines. They are also very hazardous when not safely operated and maintained. The CFA along with FCC, CASA, and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers to “*Protect your moving parts!*” by taking these precautions to reduce the chance of injury on your farm. Safety practices are always cheap accident insurance.

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For more information call:

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