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Farmer Dies from Becoming Entangled in an Unshielded Auger

DATE: December 14, 1994

MN FACE Investigation 94MN03301

SUMMARY

A 46-year-old male farmer (victim) died from injuries sustained when he became entangled in the unshielded auger of a cattle lot feedbunk. The victim was unloading feed from an upright silo equipped with an automatic silo unloader. The feed dropped down the silo chute and into a pile at one end of the feedbunk. The unshielded auger filled the feedbunk by moving feed down the center of the feedbunk. While the system was operating, the victim apparently entered the feedbunk and walked approximately one third of the distance down it. He either slipped and fell or attempted to step over the auger, and his right leg became entangled in the auger. He sustained several large lacerations on the back side of his right thigh. After a fuse blew for the auger motor and the system stopped, he freed himself from the auger. He climbed out of the feedbunk and either walked or crawled a short distance to exit the cattle lot. He entered the farm yard and continued approximately 25 to 30 feet past the silo where he collapsed and died. MN FACE investigators concluded that, in order to reduce the likelihood of similar occurrences, the following guidelines should be followed:

- all augers should be stopped, and the power source locked out, before operators attempt to perform any service or repair work; and
- all augers should be shielded to prevent operators from becoming entangled.

INTRODUCTION

On June 24, 1994, MN FACE investigators were notified of a farm work-related fatality which occurred on June 22, 1994. The county sheriff's department was contacted and releasable information obtained. Information obtained included copies of their reports and copies of photos of the incident site. A site investigation was not conducted by MN FACE investigators.

INVESTIGATION

This investigation is based on a review by MN FACE investigators of two written sheriff's department reports of the incident. Also reviewed were copies of 11 photos of the incident site taken by officers of the sheriff's department.

On the day of the incident, the victim used a silo unloader and an auger system to fill a feedbunk in a beef cattle feeding lot. The unshielded feedbunk auger was approximately 12 inches in diameter and approximately 30 feet long. It consisted of three sections, each approximately 10 feet long and was driven by an electric motor. The auger was mounted approximately 12 inches above the bottom of the feedbunk. It was positioned in the middle of the feedbunk and extended the entire length of the feedbunk. Boards approximately 2 inches thick by 10 inches wide were mounted along each side of the auger. The boards extended the entire length of the auger.

The victim unloaded feed from an upright silo equipped with an automatic silo unloader. The feed dropped down the silo chute and into a pile at one end of the feedbunk. The unshielded auger filled the feedbunk by moving feed down the center of the feedbunk. While the system was operating, the victim entered the feedbunk and walked approximately one third of the distance down it. While walking along one side of the auger, he either slipped and fell or attempted to step over the auger. His right leg apparently became entangled between the auger and one of the side boards, at a point where two auger sections were coupled together. He sustained several large lacerations on the back side of his right thigh.

After he became entangled, a fuse for the auger motor blew causing the auger to stop. He freed himself from the auger and climbed out of the feedbunk. He either walked or crawled, unassisted, a short distance across the cattle lot and entered the farm yard. He continued approximately 25 to 30 feet past the silo where he collapsed and died.

A neighbor drove by the farm place several times while spreading manure. During these trips past the farm, he noticed feed continuing to fall from the silo chute and accumulate at the end of the feedbunk. On investigation, he discovered the victim unconscious and apparently dead near the silo. He immediately summoned emergency rescue personnel who arrived at the scene within several minutes. They confirmed the victim was dead and probably had been dead for some time before being discovered.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The cause of death listed on the death certificate was exsanguination due to lacerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: All augers should be stopped, and the power source locked out, before operators attempt to perform any service or repair work.

Discussion: All augers should be stopped prior to operators performing any activities in the vicinity of the auger. This includes all service and repair work on the auger and any other activities which place an individual close enough to an auger that entanglement might occur. In addition, all auger power sources should be secured to ensure that the auger cannot start accidentally or be started inadvertently by someone else. This may require locking out all electrical circuits that operate electric motors, removing ignition keys from tractors, or removing spark plug wires from gasoline engines. If the auger involved in this incident had been stopped and the electric motor circuits had been locked out, this fatality would have been prevented.

Recommendation #2: All augers should be shielded to prevent operators from becoming entangled.

Discussion: The auger involved in this incident was essentially unshielded except for boards, approximately 10 inches wide, mounted on each side of the auger. As the victim walked along one side of the auger, he was exposed to the unshielded top of the auger. When he either slipped and fell or attempted to step over the auger, he apparently became entangled between the auger and one of the auger side boards. If the system had been fitted with a full length semi-circular guard or shield, fastened to each of the auger side boards, the victim may not have become entangled in the auger and this fatality might have been prevented.

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