

DATE: April 27, 1993

FROM: Minnesota Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (MN FACE) Project
Minnesota Department of Health

SUBJECT: MN FACE Investigation 92MN02301
Farmer Dies After Falling from the Top of a Silo

SUMMARY

A 61-year-old male farmer (victim) died of injuries he received after falling approximately 50 feet from the top of a silo. He was, presumably, preparing the silo for filling and had ascended it, by means of a caged ladder, to open some hatches at its top. Fall protection was not being used by the victim at the time of the incident, and there were no witnesses. A farm helper found the victim lying on the dirt drive at the base of the silo within ten minutes of having last seen him. He was dead on the scene. MN FACE investigators recommend that, in order to prevent future similar occurrences, the following guidelines be followed:

- > when working at elevations, workers should tie off to a substantial stationary support above the working height; and
- > boots with non-skid soles should be worn by farm workers.

INTRODUCTION

On November 13, 1992, MN FACE received notice of a October 21, 1992, work-related fall fatality. The fall occurred on a family farm; surviving family members could not be reached for interview and a site investigation could not be conducted. No police or sheriff reports of the incident could be located. The county coroner and the director of the ambulance service responding to the incident were interviewed via telephone.

INVESTIGATION

The incident occurred at 8:00 a.m. It was sunny and surfaces were dry. The victim was

preparing a silo for filling. As part of this process, it was necessary to open some hatches on the top of the silo. He ascended the 50-foot silo by means of a caged ladder on the outside of the silo. He was wearing work gloves and cowboy boots.

There were no witnesses to the incident. A farm helper found the victim within ten minutes of having last seen him. He was lying about six feet away from the base of the silo on the dirt drive; his feet were towards the silo. Because of the distance the body was lying from the silo, the ambulance service director felt certain that the victim had fallen from the very top of the silo; impressions of where his feet and head hit the ground were visible.

Resuscitation of the victim was not attempted by responding emergency medical personnel.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The cause of death listed on the death certificate was falling 50 feet from a silo. Death was immediate.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: When working at elevations, workers should tie off to a stationary support above the working height.

Discussion: Little information about the type of silo and any safety devices it featured could be obtained. A general recommendation when working at any elevation is for workers to use equipment designed for fall protection. Tying off to a stationary support above the point of operation with an approved safety belt or harness and lanyard can often mean the difference between life and death. Specifications for this personal protective equipment can be found in 29 CFR 1926.104.

Recommendation #2: Boots with non-skid soles should be worn by farm workers.

Discussion: It is not known if the boots worn by the victim contributed in any way to this fatality. However, cowboy boots can be slippery, especially if new. Farm workers should wear boots with non-skid soles to help prevent slips and falls.

REFERENCES

1. Office of the Federal Register, Code of Federal Regulations, Labor, 29 CFR Part 1926.104, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Washington, D.C., July 1, 1991.