



Fall from silo seriously harms truck driver



INCIDENT

A truck driver was seriously harmed after falling from the feed silo that he was filling. He had climbed the silo to replace the lid when he lost his balance while crouching on top and fell 5 metres to the ground.

As a result of his fall, he suffered two fractures to his spine, had serious internal bleeding, and damaged tendons in his left leg. He was unfit to work for the six months following the accident.

CIRCUMSTANCES

On the day of the accident, it had been raining, and the smooth metal surface of the silo would have been slippery. The design of the silo did not facilitate safe climbing practices, and had no safety features to prevent a fall.

INVESTIGATION

The resulting investigation highlighted that a simple modification to the silo would have prevented the fall. A rope and pulley system was created after the accident enabling the silo to be filled without the need for a person to climb the silo at all.

GUIDANCE

While many silos still require a person to climb up in order to fill, check, or maintain the silo, many can be filled with no climbing at all. It is practicable to modify many existing silos so that their lid can be opened and closed from ground level via a simple rope system¹.

Many activities may expose a person to a fall from a silo. The following controls have been found to be the preferred practicable steps²:

- Blowing product into the silo through permanent filler tubes.
- Installing fill indicators such as clear sight glasses at regular intervals up the side of the silo or field bin.
- Installing a lid opening/closing device that can be operated from the ground.
- Incorporating loading hatches, operated from the ground that allow for complete filling.
- Using a remote system for grain level assessment such as mechanical fill indicator visible from the ground or hand held sensor or weight indicator.
- Fitting a fumigation system in silos so that the pellets are delivered into the silo from ground level or alternatively on ground fumigation systems.
- Fitting a ground level access hatch to allow cleaning.
- Using an extension pole to clean the inside without the need to enter the silo.

In some cases it may not be practicable to eliminate the need for workers to be on top of a silo. In these circumstances, it is important that all practicable steps are taken to isolate the person from a fall from height. The following have been found to be practicable steps in that circumstance²:

- Install fixed stairs, ramps, work platforms or ladders complying with AS/NZS 1657; or
- Use an elevated work platform such as a cherry picker; or
- Use personal protective equipment that will prevent a fall, i.e. travel restriction³, work positioning³, or rope grabs⁴.

WHICH INDUSTRIES/SECTORS OR MATTERS WILL THIS INFORMATION BE RELEVANT TO?

All.

Endnotes

- Thinksafe (2005). *Safe use of grain augers in silos*. ACC Thinksafe, ACC. Retrieved 24 September 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.acc.co.nz/>
- Worksafe (2006). *Falls Prevention in the Agriculture Sector* (1st Edition), July 2006. Worksafe Victoria, Victorian WorkCover Authority, Australia. Retrieved 24 September 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/>
- Department of Labor (2000). *Section 8: Safety Lines, Belts, and Harnesses*. Guidelines for the Prevention of Falls. Department of Labour. Retrieved 24 September 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/>
- Department of Labor (2000). *Section 9: Roped-Access Systems*. Guidelines for the Prevention of Falls. Department of Labour. Retrieved 24 September 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/>

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