

## Harvest calls for safety-minded actions

Written by Gothenburg Times  
Thursday, 22 September 2011 14:35 -

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Agriculture remains one of the more dangerous occupations in North America, but exercising caution, getting rest and being safety-minded can go a long way toward making it safer for everyone involved, the Nebraska Corn Board said in noting that Sept. 18-24 is National Farm Safety and Health Week.

“We’re expecting another good crop this year, and it looks like farmers will enjoy good prices, too,” said Alan Tiemann of the Nebraska Corn Board. “Yet none of it is worth injury or fatality that could have been prevented by taking appropriate precautions or simply taking time.

“While we all recognize the excitement and enjoyment of harvest, staying focused and resting regularly can help a lot in keep things safe around the farm for everyone, including family members helping to bring the crop in.”

Since first proclaimed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944, National Farm Safety and Health Week has been an annual proclamation by every sitting U.S. President.

This year’s theme is Safety Counts—Your Community Depends On It. The National Education Center for Agricultural Safety, which promotes National Farm Safety and Health Week, said there were more than 50 grain bin incidents, auger related injuries, power take offs (PTO) incidents and more than two dozen fatalities in the U.S. last year.

“Grain production and handling continues to be one of the most dangerous aspects of crop production,” Tiemann said. “With more than 1 billion bushels of on-farm storage capacity across Nebraska, grain bins and associated equipment are common on farms and deserve extra attention.”

Tiemann also cautioned motorists driving on rural roads during harvest. Such roads see additional traffic during harvest, which increases the chances for accidents to occur between slower moving farm equipment and vehicles moving at highway speeds. In addition, rural intersections will have heavier-than-normal travel and dusty conditions may limit visibility, as can sun glare in the morning and evening. Standing crops in the field may also block a clear view of oncoming traffic.

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The Nebraska Corn Board encourages farmers to pay special attention to the safety features of their equipment, and encourages everyone to keep an eye toward safety on the highways and byways this harvest and year round.

Some things to consider for farmers and farm workers while on the farm this fall:

Ensure that trained family members and employees are operating powerful equipment.

Develop a set of safety rules that everyone should follow—and enforce them. Also consider developing an emergency plan so everyone is on the same page.

Check that PTOs are well protected to avoid contact with clothing or people during operation.

Check to make sure safety shields are in place on all equipment everyday—they are there for a reason.

Always be aware of power lines that can come in contact with moving equipment and augers around grain bins.

Grain bins deserve special attention and caution when grain is being loaded and removed. Safety measures should be put in place to avoid any risk of entrapment and suffocation.

Take periodic breaks to help avoid fatigue. Take a rest break for a few minutes, go for a short walk or check in with family members.

Use extra caution when backing equipment. It is easy to overlook something or more

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importantly, someone, especially a child.

Protective eye and ear wear is important in many situations.

Equip tractors and combines with a fire extinguisher, as dry crop residue is fuel for a fire.

Remind family members and workers that safe practices come before expedience.

“Harvest and fall field work is truly a thrill, with all the sights, sounds and beauty of this time of year,” Tiemann said. “So please be careful, as we’d like to see all the farmers and their families out in the fields again come springtime, when cold weather gives way to the excitement of getting the crop in the ground.”