

Prepare for a Safe Silage Harvest

How many times have you heard a story about someone who had a close call or accident with a silage pit during harvest?

Fortunately, fatalities around silage pits are not daily occurrences, but they do happen! More frequently, equipment is damaged from a silage avalanche that could be prevented.

This harvest, please share these safety tips with your employees and neighbors before filling the bunkers.



- 1) DO NOT OVERFILL! Do not pile forage any higher than what your unloading equipment can reach safely. Overfilling creates dangerous ledges.
- 2) Be cautious when removing tires, covers, and spoiled feed from the top edge of the face. Stay at least three feet from the edge, and approach carefully with minimal disturbance. A hooked pole or rod can be used to stay even farther back while pulling tires or plastic back from an edge that looks particularly unstable.
- 3) Manage the face to avoid overhangs and ledges. Avoid undercutting- this creates ledges.
- 4) Piles and bunkers should be no more than 10-12 feet high and should be at least 3 times as wide as they are high.
- 5) If more silage is added to an existing pile or bunker, always remove the plastic cover before adding it. Never put more silage on top of the plastic, the silage can easily slide down the plastic and become an avalanche during removal.
- 6) Stay away from the silage face during removal or sampling, and do not allow people near the face, especially while someone else is on top removing plastic or tires.
- 7) Take samples after knocking down the daily amount to feed or take the samples from the loader bucket after moving it a sufficient distance from the silage face. Be especially careful when sampling frozen silage.
- 8) Never park or exit vehicles near the face.
- 9) Stay clear of the tractor packing silage into the pit- These drivers are trying to focus on the job and are not always aware of others around them.
- 10) Stay alert for silage gas- the yellow/brown gas usually occurs within 60 hours of ensiling

The risk of tractor rollovers and the severity of injuries increases as the height of the silage pile increases.

Safety isn't expensive, it's priceless.

- Schedule breaks for your harvest crew so they stay alert and re-fueled during the long days
- Audit and inventory your chemical and pesticide storage rooms. Make sure all containers are properly labeled
- Make sure your fire extinguishers are charged and inspected. Put extinguishers in your combines and tractors.