

This Harvest Season, Make Planning and Safety a Priority

Do you ever feel like every year, harvest season sneaks up on you and you are scrambling to get things ready? This year, practice planning and time management as you and your employees plan to hit the fields. Keep in mind that planned maintenance and skilled equipment operation can curb downtime and reduce the potential for accidents during harvest. Preventing accidents is the key to a safe harvest. Here are a few tips to get you started in the right direction.

Equipment Maintenance & Safety Preparedness:

- Get your equipment maintenance done before harvest- change filters, clean windows, fix broken parts etc.
- Make a chart of duties and responsibilities for everyone involved
- Stock up on snacks, water and juice for employees

BEFORE HARVEST:

1. Ensure that only trained and trustworthy employees are operating large, high profile equipment- Are the employees operating machinery age appropriate?
2. Take time to instruct all workers in proper technique and safety procedures. ENFORCE SAFETY RULES!
3. Utilize a management system during harvest. Who is in charge, who does each person report to when there is a problem etc.
4. Take time to ensure all equipment is working properly. Service oil changes & replacement parts if needed.
5. Stop all moving parts before servicing any machine!! (Remember your Lock-out/ Tag-out plan.)
6. Make sure ALL guards and shields are in place!!!
7. Keep ear-plugs, respirators, first aid supplies and clean water in stock in case they are needed. Train employees on the location of these items.
8. Equip all tractors with a fire hydrant - dry crop residue is fuel for a fire.
9. Use walkie- talkies or cell phones in case of an emergency- Do you have an emergency plan??

DURING HARVEST

1. Drugs (even some prescriptions) and alcohol do not mix well with harvest & safety!
2. Encourage employees to take breaks out of the tractor to relieve them of the monotony. A short break will help them regain focus.
3. Getting lots of sleep and snacking during the day help keep energy levels up.
4. Remind employees that safe work practices are more important than expedience!
5. Know where all co-workers are in the field before moving the tractors.
6. Tie back long hair and remove loose clothing when working around PTO shafts or other moving parts.
7. Lower front end loaders when parked or moving the tractor (A Lock out Tag out precaution to reduce the danger of potential energy.)
8. Use dust control, such as a water wagon if you have the resources available
9. Keep a log of harvest activities such as weight issues, broken parts, safety issues, silage quality etc. so that you are better prepared to tackle day to day challenges
10. NEVER park a tractor or truck near a silage pit face- people should also avoid standing near the face whenever possible.

The most frequent accidents associated with combines are people falling from them while getting in & out. Remember 3 points of contact always. Use 2 hands and 1 foot or 1 hand and 2 feet at all times.