Safety in Agriculture Fatality File

Farm Worker Dies during Grain Bin Auger Entanglement

A 53-year-old farm worker was killed when he became entangled in a grain bin auger. At the time of the incident, the victim was cleaning the remaining wheat out of a grain bin when he became entangled in the sweep auger that was moving around the floor of the bin.

Hooks on the sweep auger caught the material on the worker’s pants and his legs were subsequently entangled in the auger. A co-worker working nearby heard the drive belts begin to squeal and after turning off the drive mechanism, discovered the entangled victim. The co-worker immediately asked the farm owner to call 911 while he and another worker went to the aid of the victim. The coworkers cut the material of the victim’s pants loose and worked to disentangle the victim’s legs from the auger. Emergency responders arrived within minutes and transported the victim via ambulance to the nearby hospital where the victim was stabilized prior to being transported via helicopter to the nearest major trauma center. The victim died from his injuries six hours later at the trauma center.

New York State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (NY FACE) investigators concluded that to help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, employers/farm owners should:

- Ensure that workers do not enter grain bins while the unloading mechanism is operating;
- Establish lockout/tagout procedures and ensure workers follow them any time a worker enters a grain bin or other confined space;

- Provide employees with proper training in lockout/tagout procedures and procedures for safe entry into confined spaces, such as grain bins and;
- Consider utilizing grain bin and auger designs that can help ensure safety for workers such as self-unloading or bottom-unloading bins.