

Safety for Harvest Operations

Harvest is a very busy time. In many situations, there is limited time to get everything done. Planned maintenance and skilled equipment operation can minimize downtime and reduce potential for incidents during harvest. This bulletin does not provide a full description of every piece of harvesting machinery. Such information is detailed in operator's manuals. This risk management bulletin focuses on key factors most commonly associated with harvest time injuries and deaths.

KEY POINTS

- Many employees only operate harvest equipment during specific times of the year. Training or refresher training should occur prior to each season. Operators should thoroughly review equipment manuals prior to harvest.
- Pre-season maintenance and repair should be completed before the start of harvest.
- Recognize that fatigue, drowsiness, and illness are prime contributors to incidents, specifically during long harvest seasons.
- Employees should never use drugs or alcohol while working.
- Always wear comfortable close-fitting clothing, including sturdy, protective footwear.
- Keep all equipment guards and shields in place.
- No employee should attempt any service, repair, or adjustment on any equipment or machinery unless specifically trained and authorized.
- Always shut off equipment before dismounting machinery or harvesters.

- Employees should never attempt to clear plugged or jammed equipment by hand without proper lockout/tagout procedures.

THE HUMAN FACTOR

Work practices and working conditions can impact employee safety. The following are methods to prevent injury caused by this:

- All individuals who operate field equipment should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the appropriate instruction manuals, so they will know how (and when) to carry out routine maintenance and operate the machinery in a safe, efficient manner.
- Adverse weather and changes in field conditions add to pressure during harvest. Once the weather improves, be aware of the changes that may occur and be sure to check the field conditions before starting.
- During harvest, employees often work extended shifts and may feel greater pressure. Do not rely on stimulants or depressants. Drugs and alcohol work against the keen awareness that is vital to safety.
- Periodic breaks relieve the monotony of machinery operation. If eating in the field, take the time to climb down from the machine, wash hands, and relax for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Equipment operators should be dressed for comfort and safety. Appropriate safety gear should be worn where noise, dust, or toxic materials pose hazards.
- Use the buddy system and always let someone know where you are. Have established times to check in on a regular basis.

- Children should not be permitted around machinery or in the field where you are harvesting. Far too many tragedies occur when children are in the path of equipment from which the operator's view is restricted.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT SAFETY

Equipment should be maintained in good condition and used properly. Some examples include:

- Equipment should be made "harvest-ready" in the off-season, or at least several weeks in advance of use. It takes time to get machinery into safe, efficient operating condition. You may also need lead time to obtain replacement parts.
- All routine maintenance should be carried out on schedule. Fueling and lubricating the equipment in the evening allows for qualified personnel to complete the work and ensures that the equipment is ready for the next day. This frequently reduces breakdowns during the work day.
- All guards and shields should be secured before equipment is started. These protective devices reduce the potential for individuals getting caught in moving parts. If the guards are not in place, the equipment should not be used.
- Never attempt to clear plugged or jammed equipment by hand or other methods while power is engaged. With the power of equipment, dismemberment and/or death will be the likely result of entanglement. Operators should shut down the equipment, pull the key, or otherwise disable the equipment before repair or clearing begins. Residual or potential energy should be released and implements or parts blocked to prevent movement. Once the work is completed, the equipment will be checked and cleared of all personnel before restarting.
- Fire is a hazard in the field. Every piece of powered equipment should carry a fire extinguisher.

- Never jump down from equipment or machinery. Proper hand holds and steps should be used. Always maintain three points of contact.
- When driving on roadways, speed should be adjusted for conditions. Flashers and lights should be on. Lead or follow me vehicles used for large equipment.
- Equipment operators should not text or talk on the phone while equipment is moving.
- Use of headphones and other devices for music should not be used. They are distracting to the machine operator.

For more information, contact your Zenith Safety & Health Consultant.

RM140DYFM (v1.1 - 3/11) 2

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**

Zenith Insurance Company/ ZNAT Insurance Company. 21255 Califa Street. Woodland Hills, CA 91367 ©2010 Zenith Insurance Company. All Rights Reserved. @Zenith, TheZenith and TheZenith.com are registered US service marks. Zenith Insurance Company (Zenith) assists employers in evaluating workplace safety exposures. Surveys and related services may not reveal every hazard, exposure and/or violation of safety practices. Inspections by Zenith do not result in any warranty that the workplace, operations, machinery, appliances or equipment are safe or in compliance with applicable regulations. Any recommendations and related services are not and should not be construed as legal advice or be used as a substitute for legal advice. Employee protection is ultimately the responsibility of the employer. Policy coverage is not contingent upon the provision, efficacy or sufficiency of these services.