

## Harvesting Safety Basics

### KEY POINTS:

- Carry out pre-season maintenance and repair several weeks before harvest.
- Operators should thoroughly review equipment manuals prior to harvest.
- Recognize that fatigue, drowsiness and illness are prime contributors to harvest accidents.
- Never use drugs or alcohol to keep you going.
- Always wear comfortable close-fitting clothing, including sturdy, protective footwear.
- Keep all equipment guards and shields in place.
- Never attempt to clear plugged equipment by hand while the power is engaged.

It's harvest time, and the pressure is on! Good weather and daylight hours always seem to be at a premium when you are trying to gather nature's bounty in top condition. Planned maintenance and skilled equipment operation can minimize downtime and reduce potential for accidents during harvest.

This bulletin does not provide a full description of every piece of harvesting machinery. Such information is detailed in operator's manuals. 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.

We have attempted to focus on key factors most commonly associated with harvest time injuries and deaths. Anyone from novice through seasoned operator can benefit by reviewing this material before starting their engines!

### THE HUMAN FACTOR

Safe completion of any task depends on knowledge, alertness and hazard awareness. It's natural for us to take pride in our ability to work long hours in pursuit of a goal. Nowhere is this more evident than in harvesting operations. However, fatigue, drowsiness and illness frequently contribute to mishaps in the field. Recognize when you have "had enough", and turn the operation over to someone else.

Adverse weather definitely adds to harvesting pressure. Don't rely on stimulants to keep you going, or take depressants to calm your nerves. Drugs and alcohol work against the keen awareness that is vital to safety.

Periodic breaks relieve the monotony of machinery operation. If you are going to eat in the field, at least climb down from the machine and relax for 15 to 20 minutes.

Equipment operators should be dressed for comfort and safety. Protective footwear and close-fitting clothes are essential when working in and around machinery. Appropriate safety gear should be worn where noise, dust, or toxic materials pose hazards.

### UNIVERSAL EQUIPMENT CAUTIONS

- 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,

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efficient operating condition. You may also need lead time to obtain replacement parts.

- All routine maintenance should be carried out on schedule. Evening fuel fill and lubrication make equipment ready for the next day, and prevent condensation and corrosion
- All guards and shields should be secured before equipment is started. These protective devices reduce the potential for individuals getting caught up in moving parts.
- Never attempt to clear plugged equipment by hand while power is engaged! The brain can't give us the message to let go of crop material quickly enough if the machine suddenly clears itself. With the power of modern equipment, dismemberment and/or death will be the likely result of entanglement. Alert operators develop a habit of always shutting off the power and taking the key before leaving the driver's seat.

- Fire is a hazard in the field, particularly during cereal grain harvest. Every piece of powered equipment should carry a fire extinguisher.
- Kids are a "no-no" around machinery. Far too many tragedies occur when youngsters end up in the path of equipment from which the operator's view is restricted.
- Always let someone else know where you are. Check-in on a regular basis.

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