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Protect Children from the Dangers of Grain

AMES, Iowa — Many adults are unaware of the dangerous and potentially fatal nature of grain and how children are at risk from this danger.

Temporary grain piles, unloading grain wagons and filling grain bins at harvest time are a threat to children's safety. Although children may think these areas are a fun place to play, they can be dangerous because the shifting and moving surfaces of the grain can easily cover them.

It is estimated that more than half of all entrapments and suffocations occur in flowing or moving grain. Because children are shorter than adults they can be pulled under the grain surface more quickly. Children and adults lack the strength to pull themselves free.

There are several important rules adults can follow to keep children safe from grain hazards. Keep children out of wagons, away from grain bins and off temporary grain piles. Don't let children ride on or get into a wagon load of grain or play on any grain surface. Never leave a running auger or a wagon that is being unloaded unattended. Be sure bin ladders are accessible only by adults.

It also is helpful to talk to your child about the dangers of being trapped in grain in a way that your child understands. Tell your child that people often can't breathe when they're in grain and that rescue is almost impossible. Talk about places grain can be found on the farm and let them know that is important to stay out of these places and let an adult know if another person gets in the grain.

For more information on children and grain safety use Iowa State University Extension publications, such as "Helping Children Understand Farm Hazards: What Would You Do?" and "The Mystery Club" at your local Iowa State University Extension office.