



AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

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FOCUS ON HARVEST! (PART 2)

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During September and October we've decided to focus on the harvest season. In addition to helping people into combines (September's newsletter), the AgrAbility program can help with modifications to make grain bins safer and accessible. This month we feature two consumers with different grain bin modifications for their individual needs. Chuck Schwab (ISU Extension Specialist) has shared some important grain bin safety reminders. Continue to harvest safely! (EH)

GRAIN BIN MODIFICATIONS

Ten years ago, **Darwin Hofmeister** found out about AgrAbility after a farm accident caused limits to the use of his left arm. It was harvest season and, as is the custom, Darwin was working long days on the farm. When he realized his equipment wasn't working properly, he tried to find the problem and his hand and arm were caught in the combine pulley. As Darwin recovered, he realized that he would no longer be able to use his arm and hand.

One of the challenges Darwin encountered was climbing ladders, especially to the top of his grain bin. He needed to be able to grip the sides of the ladder to steady himself, but could only do so with his right hand. One of the ideas AgrAbility staff suggested and Darwin incorporated was to add more railings in a U shape that go behind the person who is climbing the ladder. To make it even more safe, they added stairs from the top of the ladder to a "crow's nest" on top of the grain bin. Darwin says, "It's a lot safer since the rails and steps were installed."

Just last winter, a calf ran into him and injured his right shoulder. He was unable to use his right arm for over six weeks, during which time he couldn't feed himself, among other things. Darwin is making progress in his recovery, but is unsure of how much function he will regain. Once again, Darwin called AgrAbility for assistance. Climbing ladders is now even more difficult and unsafe. This summer, AgrAbility staff suggested installing a platform lift to a combine. Now that it's been installed, Darwin is back in the fields.

In the future, Darwin is hoping that he will be able to purchase a spiral stairway to put on the side of his grain bin which would replace the ladder and railings he has now. If you are interested in talking with Darwin, you can reach him at 641-847-2028.

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Max Rodemeyer was diagnosed with MS in 1979 and farmed for years without assistance. But, about 10 years ago he realized that his everyday activities were getting harder for him to accomplish safely. He heard about AgrAbility and has been involved with the program for several years. Over time, he's made several changes to his operation.

Max has modified his tractors to make the hitching process faster, easier, and safer with the help of a commercial hitch adapter. He has extra steps and handrails on his tractors, carries a cell phone for convenience and emergencies, and parks his all-terrain vehicle in the garage instead of his pickup. For planting, Max used a seed vac to fill the planter boxes with the flip of a button and without needing to lift the 50 pound seed bags. About four years ago, Max added a spiral staircase around his grain bin.

Max commented, "Every grain bin should come with the steps in place of the ladder for safety."

Although these modifications made farming much easier, Max and his wife, Jo, made the decision to turn the farm over to their younger son, Joel, last December. Max uses his years of experience to advise Joel and helps out when he can. Naturally, Joel appreciates the ease in using the equipment that Max had been using for the past few years. If you'd like to talk to Max about his farm modifications, please call him at 641-579-6197. (EH)

A GREAT RESOURCE

Farmers with mobility impairments, back injury, amputation, or respiratory conditions often find everyday use of grain storage bins difficult or impossible. There are grain bin accessories available that can make a big difference in the overall ease and operability of grain bins. For example, a grain bin level

indicator allows for a farmer to determine the grain level while still on the ground. For more information on these modifications, visit the **National AgrAbility Project** online at www.agrabilityproject.org/assistivetech/resource/grainbin.cfm. This webpage lists commercial grain bin modification resources (along with contact information) for bin level indicators and sensors, bin remote lids and caps, and stairs and rails. If you do not have access to the internet, contact Erin Haafke for the information at 515-294-8522. (EH)

GRAIN SUFFOCATION: A TRAGIC SCENARIO

It might happen in a half-empty grain wagon, or in a bin when someone else mistakenly turns on the auger. Whatever the circumstances, grain-handling entrapments can happen very quickly, often before anyone realizes there's a problem.

Flowing grain is one of the deadliest hazards during the harvest season. Most people do not realize the tremendous force of flowing grain and how quickly they can become helplessly trapped in it. Many victims suffocate in grain, even while rescuers work to save them.

Chuck Schwab, Iowa State University Extension Specialist, explains that flowing grain is like quicksand. Objects on the surface sink, and heavier objects sink quicker than light ones. A high-capacity conveyor can completely submerge a six-foot-tall man in only 15 seconds; most people are unable to get out of grain without help within only three to four seconds.

Suffocation can occur when victims ingest the grain, or when they can no longer inhale enough air to live, similar to a slow strangulation by a python. Rescue efforts can be difficult, too, because the downward

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pull on a 165-pound person trapped in grain can exceed 2,000 pounds, about the same as a small car. The sides of bins often must be cut away to rescue trapped worker, adding the additional risk of injury.

The tragic aspect is that these deaths need not occur. Careful operation during harvest reduces your risk of entrapment. Follow these steps:

- Never get into a wagon or storage bin when grain is flowing.
- Always lock powered grain handling equipment in the off position before you enter a grain bin or wagon.
- Never try to dislodge grain or start it flowing from inside a wagon or truck. Bridged grain can give way and pull in the operator.
- Apply suffocation hazard decals on all grain wagons and bins, and explain their meaning to all visitors and children.
- Always keep children away from grain storage areas.

For more information go to www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1265I.pdf for the SAFE FARM publication,

Handle your grain harvest with care, Pm-1265i. If you do not have access to the internet you can ask for a copy of the publication at your local Extension office by using the letter/number combination listed above. (CS)

GO VOTE!

In case you haven't noticed, it's election time! According to INFONET, a publication of the Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council, people with disabilities have significantly lower voter turnout than other groups. Thus, candidates spend much of their time talking about issues that pertain to people in those high voter groups, instead of the topics that people with disabilities are concerned about. So, go vote this year (and every year), and let politicians know that people with disabilities do vote and want to be represented! Visit www.sos.state.ia.us/, which is the Secretary of State's website for voter/election resources. (EH)

IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Rural Solutions Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

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