

Auger Safety on the Farm Fatality File



Man Dies After Getting His Leg Caught in A Grain Auger—Iowa.

A 65-year-old man working for a farmer during harvest was unloading a gravity-flow wagon of corn into a partially unguarded floor hopper. His right leg was caught in the auger at the bottom of the hopper, severing his leg in the mid-thigh region. The man was found lying unconscious next to the hopper with significant bleeding. The auger was still running at the time he was found by the farmer's mother. A chewed-up broom handle was found next to him.

The two-foot-wide floor hopper was covered with grating made of steel bars, allowing vehicles to ride over the hopper. Nine of these bars were removed during the time of the incident, leaving an 18-inch section of the auger exposed.

The auger consists of two sections; an open U-shaped horizontal section at the bottom of the floor hopper and a closed inclined section leading to the vertical conveyor outside the building. Since the wagon was empty, it appears that he was finishing the unloading, and possibly sweeping up spilled corn on the floor, when his foot slipped into the uncovered hopper and was caught by the moving auger.

The man was familiar with the equipment and procedures for unloading, having performed this job several times that season and the year before when this grain facility was built. He had worked part-time for the past 4 years for the farmer.

First responders were notified and arrived within a few minutes, but rescue efforts were ineffective due to the large amount of blood loss. The man was taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Recommendations based on the FACE investigation were:

1. Workers should not remove protective grates or shields from augers or other conveying equipment while the equipment is in operation.
2. Conveying equipment should be constructed to avoid clogging and operate with minimal cleaning.
3. Employers should ensure that employees have adequate training and supervision to work safely.