

SILO SAFETY ALERT

This safety bulletin has been prepared by the Stockfeed Industry and relates to the safety of our customers, our employees and our contract drivers. It has been prompted following incidents involving the operation of farm silos, and has been prepared after discussions with and the support of the field officers from the Victorian WorkCover Authority.

1. GENERAL

Occupational Health and Safety legislation applies to all workplaces, including farms.

Under OH&S legislation – self-employed people, employers and employees or a person in control of a workplace all have responsibilities to make the workplace safe.

All primary producers, whether an employer or self-employed, have a legal responsibility called a **duty of care** to ensure that they provide a safe working environment.

Anyone who enters a farm, whether as a full time employee, a casual worker, a contractor, a truck driver or just as a visitor, has a right to be protected from any hazard that may exist.

Specifically, primary producers must provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment, including all equipment and substances that are in their control. The legislation also clearly states that the occupier of a work place shall take such measures as are practical to ensure that the workplace and the means of access and egress to and from the workplace (which may be a silo) are safe and without risk to health.

2. SILO SAFETY ISSUES

2.1 Silo Design

There is a NSW WorkCover Code of Practice covering the design, installation and operation of farm silos. Refer to the weblink

http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/20775/Safety-aspects-in-the-design-of-bulk-solids-containers-including-silos,-field-bins-and-chaser-bins-Code-of-Practice.pdf

This code has equal relevance on other States.

2.2 Ladders

Children should at all times be prevented from access to silo ladders to a height of 1.8 metres.

Check strength and durability of ladders regularly.

All ladders, walkways and platforms used on a silo should comply with the requirements of Australian Standard 1657 - 2013.

<http://www.standards.org.au/OurOrganisation/News/Pages/Fixed-Platforms,-Walkways,-Stairways-and-Ladders.aspx>

If the requirements of this standard prove to be impractical to apply then a risk assessment is to be conducted and documented.

A risk assessment should be conducted for working at heights above 2 metres. The Victorian WorkCover Code of Practice for Safe Work on Roofs can be used as guidance.

https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/27364/prevention_falls_roofs.pdf

2.3 Filler Tubes

It is recommended that correctly designed PERMANENT FILLER TUBES be fitted to all silos, so that drivers do not have to climb the ladder.

Portable filler tubes and mobile “walking stick” filler tubes have been identified as presenting an *unacceptable* hazard due to the risk of injury through manual handling and equipment falling onto operators.

Filler tubes containing any PVC material are *not acceptable* due to the risk of causing a dust explosion from static electricity. Grain dust in a confined space *will explode* if there is an ignition source.

2.4 Silo Lid Openers

Silos having lids that are required to be opened to allow filling must have a lid opening device, which allows the lid to be opened and closed from the ground, so that drivers do not have to climb ladders.

The lid opener must be well designed and maintained so that the lid is opened and closed with minimal effort.

2.5 Silo Entry

MOVING GRAIN/PELLETED FEED IS A KILLER – a person can be fully submerged in grain/grain products in less than 30 seconds.

To prevent access to feed or grain stored in any silo, all entry points at the top of the silo or above stored product height are to be *permanently* guarded so that access inside the silo cannot be achieved without the use of the tool.

Bottom silo hatches, which allow access for cleaning and inspection shall be *inward* opening and fixed in such a way to prevent children from entering.

2.6 Confined Spaces

A farm silo may be considered as a Confined Workspace and it would then be necessary to comply with all provisions of the OH&S (Confined Spaces) Regulations, relevant in each State or Territory, before entering or working in the silo. There are many risks including contamination of the silo atmosphere and a lack of oxygen.

2.7 Silo Structure

Check foundations regularly for cracking or subsidence.

Foundation failure is the most common cause of collapsing silos. Older silos may not have been correctly installed on adequate foundations.

There is a maximum allowable capacity for every silo. **Never exceed this capacity.**

Ensure the silo structure is sound with no evidence of common or damaged supports and that rivets/bolts are not loose or missing. Before undertaking any structural repairs, consult the silo manufacturer.

Your silo manufacturer can supply a number of safety components to upgrade most makes of silos.

ALSO

BEWARE OF OVERHEAD POWER LINES

DO NOT RUN MACHINES WITHOUT ALL GUARDS PROPERLY FITTED IN PLACE