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PRESS RELEASE

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GRAIN CART SAFETY

Don't sidestep these important safety practices.

When grain carts first came on the harvest scene, they were said to add as much as 25% efficiency in harvesting a field because of the time combine operators save by not stopping to fill them. The increased size of grain carts – in comparison to gravity wagons – also speeds the harvest process.

Grain cart operators should be well trained in how to safely maintain and operate the equipment to help protect themselves and everyone else in the field.

The first step in safely using a grain cart is thoroughly reading the operators manual. Each cart manual should include an operation safety section that outlines the steps to safely using the equipment.

“Running the grain cart is a job which many involved in harvest don't necessarily enjoy doing,” Aaron Yoder, University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health, Department of Environmental, Agricultural & Occupational Health, says. “If you bring in extra help or have a young person using the grain cart, make sure they are fully trained and aware of all the hazards related to grain carts before you bring them to the field.”

A thorough grain cart safety checklist includes:

1. Have a first-aid kit available in case it's needed and know how to use the supplies it contains.
2. Keep a fire extinguisher available in the case of a fire. Know how to operate the extinguisher and properly use it to suppress a fire.
3. Wear appropriate protective gear that includes but is not limited to:
 - a. A hard hat anytime there are hazards from falling objects

- b. Protective shoes with slip-resistant soles
 - c. Protective glasses or goggles
 - d. Heavy gloves
 - e. Wet weather gear as necessary
 - f. Hearing protection (earplugs or muffs)
 - g. Respirator or filter mask
4. Install and secure all grain cart guards before using it in the field.
 5. Do not allow passengers.
 6. Before servicing, adjusting, repairing or unplugging anything on the grain cart, place all controls in neutral, stop the engine, set the park brake, remove the ignition key and wait for all moving parts to come to a stop.
 7. Before starting the grain cart, clear bystanders – especially small children – from the area.
 8. Review safety items annually with all personnel who will operate or maintain the grain cart.
 9. Use a tractor equipped with a Roll Over Protective Structure (ROPS). Always wear the seat belt provided in the cab.
 10. Never exceed the limits of a piece of machinery. If it's not designed to do a job, or do the job safely, DON'T TRY IT.
 11. Don't modify the equipment in any way because it could impair the equipment's function and result in an operator's serious injury or death.

Yoder notes that runovers are a common hazard when grain carts are in use. The large size of the equipment creates significant blind spots for the tractor operator using the cart and the loud noise of the equipment creates another safety barrier.

"Flowing grain coming from a grain cart creates another hazard," Yoder says. "Make sure no one else is in the area when the cart is loaded or unloaded. That's especially true for small children, who aren't likely to recognize the potential hazards of the auger and motors on the equipment."

The tractor used to pull a grain cart should be large enough to handle the size and weight of the cart when it's fully loaded.

"The tractor should be large enough that it can stop the grain cart, not just get it started rolling once it's loaded," Yoder says. "When you're towing the grain cart, you should always use safety chains and check the connection to ensure its secure before moving the cart."

Always comply with state and local laws governing highway safety and transport of machinery on public roads. Ensure that the grain cart is well lighted and as visible as possible when moving it along public roads. Proper lighting and an SMV (slow-moving-vehicle) sign will help other drivers recognize what type of equipment is on the road ahead of them. Consider having someone drive a vehicle behind the grain cart to add a layer of safety while on a road or highway.

In areas where traffic is heavy, plan a route that helps avoid the greatest amount of traffic and key driving times for others. Always yield to oncoming traffic in situations involving bridges, intersections, etc. Watch carefully for traffic when using the grain cart near or when crossing roadways.

On curves or hills, move at a low speed and make certain that at least 20% of the tractor's weight is on the front wheels to maintain safe steering. On rough or uneven ground, slow down.

Whenever the unloading auger is extended, stay away from overhead power lines. Electrocutation can occur even without direct contact.

Proper maintenance will enhance safety whenever the grain cart is in operation. Follow all equipment manual guidelines. Prior to using the grain cart, complete all maintenance requirements. During harvest, periodically tighten all bolts, nuts and screws and check to ensure that all cotter pins are properly installed to ensure the unit is in safe condition.

Never work under any equipment unless it is securely blocked. During maintenance, always use personal protection devices such as eye, hand, and hearing protections. Use heavy gloves when handling sharp components.

Follow the operator's manual instructions for hydraulic safety and tire safety. Because the hydraulic system operates under extremely high pressure, never attempt any makeshift repairs to hydraulic fittings or hoses by using tape, clamps or cements. Such repairs create hazardous and unsafe conditions.

Failure to follow proper procedures when mounting a tire on a wheel or rim of a grain cart can produce an explosion resulting in serious injury or death. Consult a qualified tire dealer or repair service to perform required tire maintenance. In replacing worn tires, make sure they meet the original tire specifications. Never use undersized tires.

"Always have an emergency plan in place in case something goes wrong when you're using the grain cart," Yoder says. "That preparation is a great advantage when you need to respond quickly and have the best outcome possible."

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