Store Manager Engulfed by Corn



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The manager of a farm supply store suffocated in a bin full of corn while attempting to dislodge stuck kernels.

The incident occurred at the company grain mill where the victim and a co-worker were attempting to empty corn from an overhead bin into a truck. As they started, the men found the discharge chute at the bottom of the bin plugged by crusted corn. The victim opened and shut the bottom of the bin several times in an attempt to shake the plugged corn loose. When this didn’t work he grabbed a piece of pipe and climbed to the top of the bin where he entered and attempted to dislodge the plug from inside. When the obstruction was cleared, the grain broke free and the victim was drawn downwards towards the chute. He was not wearing a body harness so extraction took almost two hours, by which time the man was dead.

Employees should never enter bins, silos or tanks when there is a risk of grain or materials falling and injuring or killing them. Workers who must enter such a confined space must use a full body harness connected to an appropriate anchor point or use a bosun’s chair with a lifeline. Safety systems like these allow observers to rescue workers easily without having to enter the space.

Source: Nebraska Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 02NE017