

Farm Structures FACTSHEET



Order No. 372.302-1
Revised December 2015

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR FILLING HORIZONTAL SILOS

Several farmers have been killed or injured in British Columbia when their tractors overturned while working in horizontal silos.

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture is concerned about the safety of farmers and makes these points to anyone using wheel tractors to pack grass or corn silage in horizontal silos:

- Tractors used for packing silos should be equipped with roll over protection and seat belts.
- During the filling operation, keep the angle on the silage face shallower than the final face when the silo is full.
- During filling, do a good job of spreading the material to be ensiled and keep the material packed. This will reduce the chances of the rear tractor wheels finding a soft spot and digging down, causing the tractor to overturn.
- Only experienced tractor operators should be allowed to operate a tractor in a silo. Too often small children are seen packing silage with tractors they cannot handle in an emergency.
- When packing on the face of the silage, avoid stopping part way up the slope. This can lead to over turning if the clutch is suddenly engaged (even accidentally) or may result in the tractor going out of control on the way back down the slope.
- The tractor should be in reverse gear when backing down the slope. Leaving the tractor in a forward gear and free-wheeling down the slope with the clutch depressed is extremely dangerous as the operator has little control of the tractor in this condition.
- Consider the use of the weights on the front end of the tractor used for packing. Even a front-end loader with a load of rocks or earth will help. Alternatively, a manure blade mounted on the three-point hitch on the rear of the tractor could save a life by preventing the tractor from tipping over backwards.

Horizontal silos are efficient feed storage structures and need not be the cause of farm accidents. A little more caution when using wheel tractors for packing silage in these silos might save your life or that of one of your family.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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