



The Fatal Consequences of Falling Combine Headers

How many farmers would knowingly crawl under a combine header that could fall and entrap them under an object weighing 2-3 tons?

For whatever reason, many farmers take this risk every year. Predictably, there are some hydraulic failures that result in crushing injuries to victims who have crawled under combine headers that have not been locked out.

Prevention

How can this type of incident be prevented? Service lockouts, or mechanical struts that prevent the header from lowering, are designed into all new combines for the primary purpose of preventing these fatal incidents. Combine operators have to get used to putting the lockouts in place on both hydraulic cylinders before any type of inspection or work is performed under the header mechanism.

Convincing operators to use the lockouts during harvest season is not an easy job. The rush of getting the crops in the bin or off to the elevator is often the farmer's first priority. And it's at harvest time that unsafe actions often result in tragic incidents.

The National Safety Council and its Agricultural Division remind farm combine operators to use the specially designed service lockouts, even when the inspection or maintenance work will only take a moment. Those few seconds can prevent a serious injury or death.

For more information on farm safety and health, contact Dr. Sam Steel at the National Safety Council, (800) 621-7615, ext. 2023.

*Copyright 2002 * National Safety Council * All Rights Reserved.*