

## **Michigan Agricultural Commodities Participates in Stand-Up for Grain Engulfment Prevention**

Michigan Agricultural Commodities, Inc. (MAC), is a privately held corporation that buys, sells, and stores agricultural commodities throughout the United States and Canada. MAC is Michigan's largest grain handler, with seven elevators, almost 43 million bushels of storage capacity, and around 100 employees.

### **The Situation**

Agriculture ranks among the most dangerous industries according to the U.S. Department of Labor (<https://bls.gov/iff/>) (<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf>). Working in the grain handling industry, employees come into contact with hazardous conditions on a daily basis. Grain bins present confined space areas, moving parts, dust and air quality hazards, engulfment risk, and a variety of other potential safety hazards.

Employee and customer safety remain a top priority at MAC. Suffocations from engulfment is a leading cause of death in grain bins, with the number continuing to rise. Even with a low auger removal rate of 2,000 bushels (bu) per hour, there are only mere seconds to react before becoming completely covered in grain. From the time the auger starts, there are **2-3 seconds** to react; in **4-5 seconds** a person is trapped; after **22 seconds**, a person is completely covered ([https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA\\_3329.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_3329.pdf)).

Protecting its employees has always been a priority for MAC. However, in 2017, MAC experienced an employee entrapment at one of the facilities. Although the employee was safely rescued, this re-instilled the importance of proper training to ensure all employees understand how to conduct business in a safe and proper manner. "There is no reason to take unnecessary risks that put the safety of our employees in jeopardy," said MAC President, Bruce Sutherland. "Proper employee training will help ensure all of our employees successfully complete their jobs and are able to go home to their families."

Grain bin engulfment fatalities are preventable. There are numerous [OSHA and industry resources](#) available to assist in preventing accidents. MAC intends to keep employees safe, as well as share information that can help customers do the same.

### **The Solution**

Sponsored by [OSHA and National Grain and Feed Association \(NGFA\) Alliance](#), MAC participated in the [National Safety Stand-Up for Grain Safety Week](#). During this week, locations across the nation, including MAC, conducted stand-up events focusing on reducing injuries and prevent fatalities from engulfment, and safely working around grain bins.

On Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at 9:00 am, every MAC facility hosted a Safety Stand-Up. This Stand-Up served two purposes: to remember all those who lost their lives in bin incidents, and to talk about the importance of safety in the MAC workplace. All work activities ceased for a brief Toolbox Talk to discuss hazards and the importance of prevention, followed by training. The

training activity for this Stand-Up was a live engulfment training, where employees experienced an engulfment and practiced using the rescue tubes housed at MAC facilities.

MAC cares about the safety of employees, and the safety of customers (farmers) and others who might work in or around bins. These groups of people, as well as emergency response personnel, were also invited to attend the Stand-Up. Overall, more than 60 individuals participated in the training. The majority were MAC employees; however, some were outside the company and included farmers. One location also hosted an Emergency Services Rescue Training (ESRT) event attended by 15 volunteers from the local fire department, one sheriff deputy, and an agricultural teacher and four students.

MAC also promoted bin safety through their website and social media accounts throughout the week. Safety is an ongoing commitment, and an awareness week dedicated to agricultural safety provides a unique opportunity to focus on specific risks in the industry.

### **The Impact**

Group trainings, such as this Stand Up, provide opportunities to instill the use of safe work practices. Management commitment to ensure employees go home safe each day remains unwavering. MAC has worked with the NGFA, GEAPS and other consultants to stay current on changing industry practices to keep their safety program and employee training programs up to date.

MAC also continues to utilize a Good Catch/Near Miss reporting program to recognize employees who speak up about safety concerns, and prevent potentially dangerous and costly situations from occurring. Employee involvement is critical to safety success. Feedback shows that employees believe that MAC has a strong commitment to employee safety and feel MAC is a safe place to work.

Additional information is available

at <https://www.ngfa.org/>, <https://www.geaps.com/>, [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov), <http://www.standupevents.org/grain/index.cfm>

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