**Maintenance Tip: Silo Doors**

**Presented as a Public Service for the purposes of Farm Safety**

**LET’S TALK SILOS - SILO SENSE - COMMON SENSE**

**For many years, tower silos have stood – like soldiers standing at attention – protecting farmers valuable feed crop – protecting it from not only spoilage but against contamination and other negative outside sources. Tower Silos have performed so well and for so long that often little attention is given to their value and importance on the farm, or to their maintenance.**

The call came just before filling time in the spring; “I think the cover on top of my silo chute is loose. Can you come check it out?” It was a 70’ silo with self-storing doors. All the doors were swung open and the chute needed to be climbed to check the cover. After closing all the doors to climb to the top, it was discovered that the cover was in good shape.

Next year the call came again, just before filling; “I think the cover on my chute is loose. Can you check it out?” This time, the farmer was told it would be checked out when the silo was full. Just like farmers, silo guys are pretty smart. After that, the farmer closed his doors as he emptied the silo.

Whether plywood, fir, cedar, fiberglass, plastic, or steel, silo doors serve two purposes: first, they keep the door opening tight to prevent spoilage, and second, they provide a ladder to climb to the feed level. Both functions are important.

If doors and door jams are not tight, they provide a source of oxygen. With this source of oxygen, the feed around them will spoil. In some cases of dry feed, poorly fitting doors have caused silo fires. Most wood doors are double lapped. When individual boards start to fall out, it is time for replacement. Also, doors should be checked for deterioration. When this happens, a step bolt can be pulled right through it.

New standards for doorsteps are: 16” wide, 15” apart, and 7” toe space. A good deal, easy to climb, and feed that would build up behind the step can now fall through (most of the time).Door latches are now designed to not open unless they are released. This is especially important if you need to climb the door system when they silo is empty.

Upgrading silo doors is good sense and doors are still made for all types of silos. There are door systems available for the old concrete silos with the open door column.

**Your tower silo is protecting your valuable feed. It needs to be in top notch condition to do its job. You can’t expect it to do its job if it’s not maintained. Common Sense tells us to inspect the doors every time you climb your silo. An Remember: ----- If there is doubt, replace them!**

Disclaimer

These articles are contributed by Bruce Johnson of Wisconsin Silos. They are meant to be informative and fun to read. They are not all inclusive. Your best source of information is the International Silo Association Operator’s manual or call the International Silo Association at 610-607-3622.