**Maintenance Tip: Silo Ladders and Cages**

**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.**

Stand at the bottom of an 80’ silo. Look up. There’s a ladder on it and a fill platform at the top. It’s an old silo and there’s no cage. It has a 12 inch wide ladder. Maybe the rungs are 2’ apart. It’s kind of rusty. The fasteners don’t look too good. Do you want to send your son up there to see if the silo is full?

On newer silos that have been built in the last twenty years, the standards for silo ladder systems have changed. These standards read: 7” toe space, 16” wide rungs, not more than 16” rung spacing, ladder starts 8’ above grade, cage above 16’, rest platforms on silos over 50’ tall, large hoop on the bottom of the cage and cage with seven vertical straps. These standards are not law, but today’s builders comply with them.

Existing ladders and cages should be checked every time before climbing. Sometimes the ladder fasteners rest behind the hoops. These fasteners need to be in good shape and properly secured. Other ladders are fastened with J-Bolts. These brackets and fasteners need to be tight and deterioration free. Ladder joints need to be bolted securely. Everything needs to be checked for corrosion.

Safety cages are either bolted to the ladder or fastened behind the silo hoops. These cages need to be checked to make sure everything is tight. D-Hoops and verticals are tubular, flat or flat-formed. All the bolts need to be tight. All the steel components need to be inspected for rust, corrosion and fatigue.

Platforms need to be secure. The flip-down platform needs to rest securely and the surrounding steel straps need to be corrosion free. The platform should lock in vertical position when it is not in use. If anything is suspect --- it needs attention.

Replacement ladders and cages are available. Retro-fit cage is available for most ladder systems that are in good shape. There is no good reason that your silo ladder system might be unsafe.

**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. And remember to look up your silo ladder system. If you wouldn’t send your son or a hired man up it; getting it replaced, updated or fixed is smart, safe and a good investment.**

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.