**Maintenance Tip: Unloader Suspensions and Cables**

**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 this morning; “We were raising our unloader, it’s halfway up the silo. It started to pull hard so we stopped. On the outside pulley, we got a bird’s nest caught in the cable and we can’t let it down. We can’t pull it up. What do we do?

The call came last week; “We’ve got a three-cable suspended unloader. When we were raising it, one of the cables broke. The silo is empty. What do we do?

Many times the call comes; “We were pulling the unloader up and the cable broke. What do we do?”

All these situations were taken care of, but at the expense to the farmer and with loss of time during harvest. How are they preventable?

A silo unloader cable needs to be replaced when the small strands in it begin to break. If you feel or see broken strands, it is dangerous. Most often, a cable wears first about 10’ above the unloader where the cable sits on the outside suspension pulley during filling. Also, a cable wears at the point of attachment to the unloader. Cables need inspection every year and replacement every 8 to 10 years. Cable costs run anywhere from $200.00 to $500.00. Replacement labor is extra. Replacement can be easily done when the silo is full. If it is not full, better call a professional; he will know how to handle it.

Upon inspection, many times you will find that the suspension pulleys are not turning. Over the years, the cable running across them has cut a groove in the pulley, further damaging the cable. These pulleys will also need replacement.

The answer is to inspect your cable every time the unloader is raised. But remember, a lot of cable never gets on the hoist, so you don’t see it. Inspect and lubricate pulleys every time the silo is full. If they are not turning, replace them. Your best resource is your unloader dealership. If they can't handle your situation, they will know of someone who can.

**Your tower silo is protecting your valuable feed. Common Sense tells us to inspect, clean and maintain the pulleys and cables at the proper time; to reduce costs and to insure they will work when you need 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.