Silo Safety –

Suspension & Cable

Never, never, climb out on a suspended unloader and never put yourself under a suspended unloader. Common sense, yes but it’s done and serious injury or death can be the result.

So when do you replace an unloader cable, check the unloader suspension or replace the hoist? This should be a scheduled event and it should be done when the silo is full. That’s when it’s convenient and doesn’t require special equipment. Too many times maintenance is forgotten, making it unsafe to pull up the unloader, delaying filling and resulting in costly repairs.

Your unloader cable wears out first where it sits on the pulley on the outside of the silo when filling. That’s about 15 feet above the unloader. This never gets inspected. So cable replacement is recommended every 8 to 10 years. If rust or loose strands are noted, don’t wait. Replace It right away.

Suspension pulleys move slowly and often seize up. If they are not turning, the cable slides across them. Eventually, the pulley grooves out and cuts the cable. Lubricate suspension pulleys when the silo is full and replace them when necessary.

A customer once called. As he was raising his unloader, the open gear winch let go. I knew when it happened, he turned and ran because the back of his T-shirt was splattered with gear lube from the spinning gears.

 Make sure that you have the right hoist for the weight of your unloader. A heavy duty oil bath hoist is always a good choice. And make sure there’s oil in it. When raising the unloader, it’s a good idea to occasionally touch the gear enclosure to make sure it isn’t hot. **Remember, time spent checking your cable, hoist and suspension is well worth it.**

\*These articles are contributed by Bruce Johnson, President of the International Silo Association (ISA) and other members of the ISA. They are meant to call attention to silo safety. They are not all inclusive. Your best source of information is the International Silo Association’s “Silo Operator’s Manual” which is available on our website at http://silo.org/silo-operators-manual/ . You can also contact us at 1-833-472-7456, info@silo.org or on our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSiloAssocialtion/