

## Pro Cooperative partners with Pocahontas Fire Department

With harvest quickly approaching, it is important to remember to practice safety while working with grain bins. On Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, Pro Cooperative partnered with the Pocahontas Fire Department for a grain bin evacuation and rescue training and demonstration. The training included a 3.5 hour classroom discussion followed by a demonstration with a live grain bin prop.

Grain bins are a crucial aspect of agriculture, providing an opportunity to store grain all year for farmers and the local elevator. These bins are very important to row crop farmers but can also be dangerous if the proper procedures aren't followed. Grain bin engulfment is a serious situation that can happen in just a few seconds. According to AgDaily, there were 42 reported grain-related entrapments that occurred this year alone. "This year had the highest number of reported grain entrapments in over a decade". Just in Iowa alone, there were 24 confinement cases and 8 grain entrapment cases. With these startling statistics, the two teams, Pro Cooperative and Pocahontas Fire Department wanted to be trained and ready in case a situation like this occurs in our area.

Dan Wallace, location manager at Pro Cooperative's Pocahontas location, stated the training was extremely educational and hands on for all in attendance. The training and demonstration was provided by Professional Rescue Innovations (PRI), who offers different training courses for firefighters, industrial workers, and emergency personnel. Wallace shares, "there is always a possibility for these scary situations to happen. This training provided the 'why' to the importance of knowing what to do to avoid these situations and how to handle them if they arise. It was nice to do this training with the local Fire Department so both parties are on the same page for when this day might happen." He continues, "If this situation were to happen at the elevator, we know how to manage the situation until the fire department arrives on scene. Thankfully, Pro has really focused on safety these last few years and have been implementing all grain bins to have a zero-entry sweep inside the bins so our staff doesn't need to enter the bins to help eliminate the opportunity for an engulfment."

Pocahontas Fire Department Chief, Jim Malecek, was also in attendance for the bin training at the Fire Department Station in Pocahontas. He mentioned that it had been 10 or more years since they had a training on grain bin safety, evacuation, and rescue. Malecek shares the Pocahontas Fire Department has all the tools to successfully execute a rescue (or recovery) for a grain bin engulfment that should occur in the Pocahontas area. "The Fire Department had 18 of the 26 members attend and participate in the training and almost half of our department has not done a training like this before". The firemen were also able to experience the engulfment firsthand by being buried in the grain to feel what it is like to be trapped. "The guys were buried knee, waist, and chest high in grain to feel what it is like to be trapped in the grain and then the other firemen could practice rescuing them with the tools the department has on the trucks. Those that were buried chest deep mentioned that it was challenging to breathe

due to the pressure of the grain. Those statements just reiterated the importance of how quickly the situation could go south if we don't move quickly, while also keeping in mind the safety of the individual we are saving and ourselves. Every second counts in these scary situations and now we know how to safely save someone from an engulfment if we need to thanks to the training.”

One of the key points from the training is to remember to stay calm. Once an individual is trapped, the grain acts like quicksand and they will get stuck more if they try and get themselves out. Additionally, once grain is past knee high, it is nearly impossible to move. Never go into a bin (called an entrant) without someone watching from the outside (called an attendant). Always be tied off and have a safety harness on so rescue crews can find the person inside the bin faster. If you don't feel like it is a good idea or it isn't safe to enter a bin, don't. Two sets of eyes are better than one, sometimes the second person sees a hazard the first person doesn't see like shelved up grain on the sidewalls of the bin, grain stuck to the ceiling of the bin, or misjudge how deep the grain is on the floor. Lastly, it is never a good idea to go into the bin while moving grain in or out of the bin. Always call the first responders if someone is trapped in grain; every second counts in these scary situations.