Driver Pulled Into Hopper



A farm employee was trapped and crushed in a hopper while he was unloading alfalfa cubes from a truck.

He had parked the truck close to the powered hopper. A conveyor from the truck to the hopper was lowered into place. To enable the conveyor to handle a greater volume, he placed sheets of plywood inside it to make higher walls.

During the unloading operation, a piece of the plywood vibrated loose from its position on the conveyor and fell into the hopper. The worker got out of the truck cab and entered the hopper without first shutting off the conveyor. He slipped and was pulled by the conveyor feet first into the opening of the hopper. He was wedged into the one by three foot space and was suffocated.

Materials handling work involves many hazards, related to both the material and the equipment used to move it. In this case, the material was livestock feed in the form of alfalfa cubes. The equipment was similar to that used in many kinds of workplaces – a truck, a conveyor and a hopper. Anyone working around such equipment must be sure to get training, and then use it. The worker killed in this incident had been trained in the correct procedures and was familiar with the hazards of the moving equipment he was working with. And yet he took a chance by failing to shut off the power.