



Grain auger safety reminders

On many farms, grain augers are in use for a very limited period of the year. Maintenance of such equipment may be overlooked or neglected.

Pre-season auger repairs are vital to minimizing harvest downtime. Timely maintenance also reduces accident potential by eliminating obvious hazards, and renewing operator familiarity with the equipment.

Following are basic guidelines for the care and use of grain augers.

Machine inspection

1. Check that all guards are in place, properly secured, and functional. The guard surrounding the auger intake is critically important. Replace all safety decals that are worn, missing, or illegible.
2. Inspect winch and cable (or other lifting system) for condition, security, and operation. There should be at least three complete wraps of cable around the winch drum in the "full down" position. The cable anchor on the winch drum must be tight.
3. Check all fasteners for tightness. Belts and chains should be in good condition and properly adjusted.
4. Check oil levels in gear box and drive box. Lubricate the machine as specified in the owner's manual.

Safe auger transport

1. Grain augers should always be empty and in the "full down" position for transport. The lift arm of the undercarriage should be seated against the down position stop, with slight tension on the winch cable and at least three complete wraps of cable around the winch drum.
2. The hitch pin should be securely attached and a safety chain connected to the auger and the towing vehicle.
3. A slow moving sign should be displayed at the output end of the auger. Don't travel faster than 40 km/hour. Be particularly cautious when turning!
4. Watch for overhead obstructions and electrical wires. Electrocution can occur without direct contact.
5. Never allow anyone to stand underneath or ride on an auger while it is being transported.

Moving into working position

1. Never move an auger manually. Augers should always be empty before lifting or moving.

2. When releasing from or attaching to the towing vehicle, test the intake end for downward weight. Lift slowly and keep the intake end no higher than the tractor drawbar. Don't push the undercarriage.
3. The auger must be on a level surface, attached to a vehicle, and its wheels must be free to move as it is raised or lowered. Keep travel distance to a minimum when placing a raised auger.
4. Make sure the entire area above the auger and in the line of travel is clear of obstructions and electrical wires.
5. Slowly move the auger into working position with the towing vehicle--never by hand! Make certain everyone is clear of the work area.
6. Once in place, the auger should be anchored at the intake end, and/or supported at the discharge end. Wheels on the auger and the power source should be checked on both sides. Never attempt to increase auger height by positioning wheels on lumber or blocks.

Preparing for operation

1. Confirm that all driveline components are in good condition and properly shielded.
2. The work area surrounding the area should have secure footing, and must be free of all debris and tools which could lead to accidental tripping and/or falling.
3. Ideally, the work area should be marked off. It is the operator's duty to ensure that children and bystanders are kept well clear. If anyone not involved in the operation enters the hazard area, equipment should be shut down immediately.

Safe auger operation

One individual should be in charge. The auger should be periodically inspected during operation.

While the auger is running:

1. Observe work area restrictions, as outlined above.
2. Keep all safety shields and devices in place.
3. Make certain everyone is clear before operating or moving the machine.
4. Keep hands, feet, hair, and clothing away from moving parts.
5. Shut off and lock out power to adjust, service, or clean the equipment.

Auger shutdown guidelines

Normal shutdown

Make certain that the hopper and auger are empty before stopping the equipment. The power source should be "locked out" before the operator leaves the work area.

Emergency shutdown

If an auger has to be immediately shut down under load, disconnect and lock out the power source. Clean as much grain from the hopper and auger as possible. Never attempt to start a full auger--the equipment could be seriously damaged.

Footnote: Manufacturers recommend that augers be stored in the "full down" position with the intake end anchored. This protects the auger against toppling over during a wind storm. It also eliminates the possibility of an inexperienced operator hooking up to a raised auger and driving the unit into an overhead power line.