

SAFETY
PAYS

INSIDE

- P. 2
- Check Out New Safety Director Conference
- P. 3
- River Qualification File Basics
- P. 4
- Are You Burglar-Proof?
- P. 4
- Propane Plant Inspections Can Prevent Big Problems
- P. 5
- Preventing Tank Contamination

EXERCISING THE BREAKER

It's never safe to assume a piece of equipment is going to work correctly each and every time. That's why, when it comes to relying on circuit breakers in Topflight Grain Cooperative's multiple facilities, Eric Clements sleeps better at night knowing the breakers have been inspected and "exercised." It's a preventive maintenance step this central Illinois grain cooperative began taking about five years ago. The goal: to ensure circuit breakers will perform as needed in case of an electrical overload.

"Our electrician told us that we really should exercise our breakers and the electrical disconnects," says Operations Manager Clements, explaining that the electrician had seen cases in which a breaker was unable to shut off because it had been in position for so long it had frozen in place. "Our fear was that if a breaker was called on to trip and couldn't, it could lead to a possible fire or overheating of equipment."

Today, the 10 to 20 circuit breakers in each of its 12 year-round and seasonal grain handling facilities are exercised annually—generally in the summertime prior to harvest. In addition, the electrical company—Atchison Electric out of Sullivan, IL—cleans out the dust, dirt, and cobwebs from the circuit breakers. They also utilize a thermographic, or infrared, camera to detect any hot spots in electrical connections, fixing problem areas immediately.

Clements said Topflight Grain began using the infrared cameras through another company about 15 years ago. "That company would tell us where our hot spots were and what needed to be repaired—but then they'd leave and a lot of times those repairs weren't being made in a timely manner," says Clements. That's when the cooperative suggested Atchison Electric purchase the infrared camera and do the work instead. "Once they determine there are hot connections," says Clements, "they repair them right away. It avoids late-night calls to them and gives us peace of mind."

Utilize a reputable electrical company

Clement recommends that cooperatives find and work with a reputable electrical company to conduct the annual maintenance work. "The people that exercise the breakers have to be properly trained and must wear the proper PPE (personal protective equipment)," says

Clements. PPE includes an appropriate arc flash suit, gloves, and face shields. "This is not something just anyone can do," he insists. "These are high amperage breakers. When you turn on and off a 400- to 600-amp breaker, it's a very dangerous activity. If there was a major short in wires to the breaker, and an employee would throw that breaker, an arc flash could take place."

Instead, Clements says Topflight Grain's employees are trained to contact him or the company's safety director whenever a main breaker trips. The electrical company is then contacted. "It doesn't happen very often, but when it does, our employees are trained to take it seriously," he explains. "They are not to fool with it themselves."

Having the electrical company come out each year to check and exercise each circuit breaker costs dollars, but Clements says it is worth the time and cost. "As time goes on and the electrical company becomes familiar with our facilities and makes the needed repairs, we have fewer problems," says Clements. Only once during an exercise of a circuit breaker did the electrical company discover one that did not trip. "Fortunately, it wasn't in a situation that would have caused danger to the plant or employees, but in some situations it could cause a tremendous amount of heat which could cause a fire." Avoiding electrical fires, and protecting equipment, facilities, and people make Topflight Grain's preventive maintenance program a very good investment. ▀



Topflight Grain Co-op's exercise of circuit breakers helps ensure they'll work when needed.

Dry Fertilizer Plant Checklist for Fall

As the fall fertilizer application season nears, it's an excellent time for businesses operating dry blend fertilizer plants to review basic safety and maintenance measures. Here's a checklist to consider:

• CHECK BIN SIGNAGE

We all know how important it is to make sure the correct analysis is applied to your customers' fields. Be vigilant in maintaining correct product signage for all of your bins, especially since some products are very similar in color. Many times, the products in bins are switched several times in a single season. The problem is that signage isn't always updated to reflect the change. I've witnessed bins that are labeled with "Urea" actually storing white potash, or the other way around. It takes someone with a very good understanding of the two products to be able to recognize the granulation differences.

• WHAT'S THE CORROSION FACTOR?

Unless a plant is brand new, it's very apparent how corrosive fertilizer is on equipment and electrical

service. Do a full pre-season inspection to ensure corrosion isn't causing damage severe enough to cause breakdowns or injuries during the busy season.

For example, pay close attention to the condition of metal surfaces, including ladders and railings. It's easy to take these for granted, but they can fail and cause serious injury when not maintained correctly. When I worked at my hometown cooperative, a fellow employee broke through the expanded metal flooring on a bulk plant tower. Luckily, he caught himself at chest level, but he still sustained bruises and scratches. Part of your maintenance and safety program should include removing rust and painting critical surfaces. In addition, badly corroded electrical service panels, wiring, and fixtures have been the culprit in many fertilizer plant fires. Make certain they are part of the inspection program and that, when necessary, they are repaired or replaced.



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• A DUSTY SITUATION

Dust, whether product is coming in or out of a dry plant, is always a problem. I recently visited a cooperative that is spraying a few ounces of mineral oil per ton of product on their incoming potash, DAP, and/or MAP as the fertilizer is conveyed from the truck to the building. This has dramatically reduced the dust that's usually generated as bins are filled and emptied. It even reduced the dust cloud while fertilizer is spread in the field. Those dust clouds can alarm customers, especially when they see it as product that they've paid for drifting away with the wind. The biggest beneficiaries, however, are the employees who must deal with annoying dust.

• FACILITY UPKEEP

Finally, ensure ongoing repairs are made to the building itself. Many fertilizer buildings have been damaged when implements like articulating loaders and skidloaders back out of bins and push out the opposite walls. A heavy snow load above these damaged walls could increase the potential for roof collapse over the winter. Also, ensure that bin cross supporting and bracing is in place and adequate to prevent side wall and back wall blowouts.

Take time now to make sure your dry blending plant is ready to meet the demands of fertilizer application this fall and beyond. ▀



Now is the time to make sure your co-op's dry blending plant is ready for the busy season ahead.

Safety Directors Leadership Development Conference

The first-ever Leadership Development Conference for cooperative safety directors is scheduled for January 16-17 at the Harrah's Convention Center in Council Bluffs, IA. Hosted by the Ag Cooperative Safety Directors Association of Nebraska (ACSDNE), the two-day seminar is focused on helping safety directors build successful safety cultures in their company. The conference is open to safety directors, insurers, and other related safety professionals from Nebraska and the surrounding region.

"We are bringing in some top-notch speakers who are experts in behavior safety and safety leadership development," says ACSDNE President Brad Bousquet, vice president of safety and compliance for Central Valley Ag. "We recently

polled our ACSDNE members to see how our association could bring more value and agreed that the one area we could all improve upon is building safety cultures at our companies. Writing safety programs that meet our regulatory requirements is the easy part. Getting ownership and participation in those programs from front-line employees, location managers, and corporate management can sometimes be the challenge. That was the impetus for holding this conference."

Space for the conference is limited, so please act quickly if you are interested. For more information about attending the event, contact Bousquet at (402) 649-3972. ▀

A Primer on Driver Qualification Files

If your company has had its 2012 annual site safety survey visit from your AMIC Risk Consultant, chances are that you've gone through the AMIC Transportation Safety Audit. One of the audit's sections focuses on your Driver Qualification Files (DQF) and the items that will be specifically looked at during a Department of Transportation (DOT) Compliance Review. It will also review your good hiring practices to ensure that your company does not hire a potential problem driver.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) 49 CFR part 391 covers the qualification of drivers. The fact that the DOT dedicated an entire section of the regulations to this topic indicates its importance. So what does the DOT require for a Drivers Qualification File?

The section of the regulation addressing all of the items needed for the DQF is entitled "Background and Character." This section also covers the only items that must be made available to any authorized inspector during a compliance review as it relates to a driver's personal information. There are eight different items required to be included in the DQF, and depending on the driver's classification, not all of these items may be needed. Some differences are made for intrastate (operating inside the borders of only one state) and interstate (operating by crossing the borders between any two or more states) drivers.

Eight items needed in a DQF

- 1. 12-part driver's application for employment.** This application differs greatly from the general employment application, and the DOT directed the 12 sections that must be included on the application. The driver must complete or make note in each of the sections of the application leaving no area blank, and the applicant must sign and date the statement at the end of the application stating that all of the information provided is true. This statement must be placed at the end of the application just like on any other legal form. You can use the application available on the AMIC Transportation Safety disc or review regulation requirements at 49 CFR 391.21 to ensure that your application meets these requirements.
- 2. Copy of the drivers Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) (Driving Record)** from each state in which a driver has held a driver's license for the preceding three years prior to the completion of the application for employment. This MVR should be received prior to the driver being hired and requires that the driver sign a release giving your company permission to access their MVR. This release must also be maintained in the file.
- 3. Certificate of a road test or a copy of the driver's CDL.** Any driver of a tank-type vehicle must have had a road test taken and documented for your company. It is recommended that you road-test all drivers prior to hiring, allowing you to identify any bad driving habits. Documentation of the road test can be made on the form provided on the AMIC Transportation Safety disc.
- 4./5. Annual MVR and annual review/certification of violation by the driver.** The annual MVR must be maintained in the file for three years after completion. The driver must complete a certification stating any moving violations that they have been convicted of in the previous 12 months. This should include violations both in a personal and/or company vehicle.
- 6. Annual certification completed by employer relating to the annual review of the MVR.** This certification

states that after reviewing the driver's latest MVR and his/her statement on any moving violations, the driver is still qualified to operate a commercial motor vehicle for your company. Also, although not stated, this is where you, as the employer, should compare the driver's moving violations to your company's driver hiring standards to ensure that they still meet requirements. If not, then as the employer you should complete the statement that the driver is not qualified to operate a vehicle for your company and either terminate them or initiate remedial corrective actions. If you were to maintain a driver that poses a risk to the motoring public and that driver were to have an accident, you could be opening the company to significant legal problems.



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- 7. Copy of the medical examiner's certificate.** The medical examiner's certificate is required only for those drivers who transport hazardous materials and those who may operate interstate, although your company can require all of your drivers to receive a medical examiner's certificate. Only the medical examiner's certificate is required to be in the file. The long-form physical is considered confidential information and should not be in the DQF. If your company does maintain long-form physicals, they should be kept in a confidential file.
- 8. Any documentation for the new entrant drivers.** This information is required for any driver that you hire or promote that has less than one year of commercial driving experience. This training must be completed within 90 days of the individual being placed into a driving position. More information on the training requirements can be found on the AMIC Transportation Safety disc.

The only additional information that may be required to be in the file would be any performance evaluations or certifications relating to a medical waiver or exemption that has been granted to the driver.

Once you have all of this information contained in the DQF, you must place these files into a limited-access locked file cabinet. Additional information on the DQF and all of the forms can be found on the AMIC Transportation Safety disc. If you have additional questions, contact your AMIC Risk Consultant or Transportation Specialist Terry Lively at tlively@austinmutual.com or 402-679-5357. ▶



DON'T BE A BURGLARY VICTIM

As unemployment rates remain elevated throughout the country, many people are left struggling to provide for themselves and their families. The economic doldrums might be the cause of an increasing number of theft and burglary claims from our policyholders.

Whatever the cause, most of these break-ins occur late at night while suspects can work under the cover of darkness. In order to prevent your business from being victimized by theft and burglary, consider the following precautions:

- If possible, utilize deadbolt locks on all outside entrances.
- Padlocks used instead of deadbolt locks should be made of steel. Any serial numbers on the locks should be removed to prevent

the production of unauthorized keys.

- When closing the business, make sure windows are locked. Consider the use of metal grates on windows that may be hidden from view of passing traffic.
- Keep the inside and outside of buildings lighted, especially near doors and windows. The tampering of exterior lights can be thwarted by installing light covers.
- Keep cash registers in plain sight from the outside of your business, allowing police to monitor them throughout the day and night.
- Install a fireproof safe that is securely anchored to prevent it from being taken by burglars.
- Change the safe combination anytime an employee who has had access to the safe leaves your business.



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- Keep minimal amounts of cash on hand at all times.
- Invest in security such as surveillance cameras, burglar alarms, closed circuit television, fire sensing, and battery backup.

Taking preventive measures may not completely protect your business from becoming a target; however, research shows that safeguards can reduce the likelihood of theft and burglary. And, while there is a cost to prevention, even low-cost actions can significantly reduce the cost from a crime committed against your business. ▶

Inspect to Help Avoid the Unthinkable



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A propane explosion February 2012 at an ag cooperative in Wisconsin provides a stark reminder that periodic inspections at your propane plant can help keep the same incident from occurring at your business.

The explosion occurred after an employee was filling his bobtail delivery truck at the bulk plant and the hose disconnected from the truck. The employee tried to reconnect the hose, but when his efforts failed, he ran from the area. An unknown source ignited the propane causing the truck to explode. That explosion ignited the co-op's office and several other nearby buildings. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured.

It's a scene no one wants to repeat at their facility. Following is a standard checklist that can help keep the unthinkable from happening at your business.

1. **Remove combustible materials and ignition sources from around the plant.** Vegetation, used tires, trash, etc. should be cleared from the area. The area should also be kept free of potential ignition sources that could ignite propane that has either leaked from the plant or escapes while propane is being transferred into delivery trucks.
2. **Inspect the piping and plant transfer hose periodically for leaks or damage.** The hose should be inspected for cuts, soft spots, bulges, kinks, and any exposed wire-braid reinforcement. The couplings on the hose should be inspected to ensure they are not coming apart and that any bolts are not loose or severely corroded. Threads on the end of the transfer hose should be closely inspected for wear. Over time, the threads become worn and could allow the hose to separate from the truck during filling. If problems are discovered, the plant should be taken out of service until repairs are made.
3. **Confirm your plant's required emergency shutdown system operates correctly.** Every plant is required to have an emergency shutdown system that,



Follow a basic inspection protocol to help avoid dangerous incidents at your propane plant.

when activated, immediately shuts down the supply of propane. While these systems can be invaluable during an emergency, they are often neglected over time and may not work properly when you need them. Test them periodically to ensure they do shut off the supply of propane. In addition, make certain that they are clearly labeled so employees and/or emergency responders can quickly find the controls.

4. **Is your plant properly labeled?** Correct labels should warn the public and emergency responders as to the contents of a tank and the dangers associated with propane. The tank should be labeled with "Propane" and "Flammable." "No Smoking" signs and NFPA 704 diamond placards should be posted around the plant. Replace the labels when they become faded and worn.
5. **Is your plant secure?** Where there is a possibility of damage to the plant from vehicles, steel guard posts filled with concrete should be positioned in order to create a vehicle barrier. To protect the plant from tampering and trespassing, a six-foot industrial-type fence should enclose the container appurtenances, piping, valves, bulkhead, and hoses. An alternate to the fence can be used if it effectively secures the plant and prevents any type of unauthorized operation.

Periodic and proper inspections of your propane plant take time, but it's well spent when it catches potential issues and improves safety. Keep your plants safe and always use precautions while they are in operation. ▶



Tank contamination claims can result in damaged fields for your customers.

Steps to Avoid Tank Contamination

Tank contamination continues to be a big driver in agronomy misapplication claims. In most cases, with some extra vigilance and awareness, the incident could have been prevented. Following is a list of the most common causes.

Inadequate rinsing. Austin Mutual is asking that EVERY company we insure have a written triple-rinse policy prominently provided to its applicators. We are also asking that every application rig have a written log to document its rinsing. This can be a separate log book or incorporated into an applicator's daily field log. This log should include: time rinsed, where rinsed, what field it was coming from, what field it was going to, what chemicals were being rinsed out, what chemicals were going into the tank, etc. Contact any of Austin Mutual's Risk Consultants if you need examples of either a triple-rinse policy or rinsing log books.

Forgetting to rinse. This is the most preventable situation and yet we have claims every year involving an applicator who simply forgot to rinse. This often happens when switching from a GMO to a non-GMO crop. The salesmen and/or plant operators who send maps out to the applicator should always make a note on the load sheet reminding the applicator that he/she is switching to a non-GMO crop. When in doubt, just rinse.

Using partial, or the wrong jug. Make certain that everyone who is handling chemicals at the plant or in a tender truck understands that if chemicals are to be moved from one jug to another, the correct label is placed on that jug, and that it is well-marked to avoid confusion. Remember that it is never acceptable or legal to sell a partial jug to a customer.

Contamination at plant or tender truck. Make sure that plant operators know their plants well, and that when using bulk chemicals, there are dedicated lines

for each chemical whenever possible. In addition, make sure that temporary or part-time tender truck drivers are doing their due diligence if tender trucks need to be rinsed.



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Fertilizer in the mixing water. When fields are sprayed with herbicide and the water added mistakenly contains fertilizer, crops can be impacted. While a crop can generally recover, the damage can be significant. To avoid the problem, check the manifolds in the plant. On some manifold designs, a sticky fertilizer valve can result in fertilizer getting into your water during post applications. If this is a possibility with your current set-up, consider having your manifolds redesigned.

Using granule or other non-liquid chemical formulas. We have recently encountered situations in which normal industry standard rinse procedures are not adequate to completely clean out the machines. Consult the label to ensure that no extra steps are required when using the non-liquid formulas. And, when you have finished using a granular product, it is a good idea to take an end cap off of the boom during your rinsing to make sure that there are no remaining unsuspended granules in the booms that could end up endangering future crops.

I would also remind you that if there are any ag-related claims still looming this season at your cooperative, please notify Austin Mutual as soon as possible so that they can be investigated prior to harvest. Once crops are harvested, investigating some claims becomes virtually impossible. Thank you, and have a safe harvest season. ▀



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NEBRASKA -

Nick Plate, with the Nebraska State Patrol, provided members of the AG Cooperative Safety Directors of Nebraska (ACSDNE) with a presentation on general DOT rules and Data Q during the organization's quarterly meeting July 13. Plate also discussed ways to challenge safety scores, presented a live level 1 inspection, and demonstrated the DOT air brake training system.

Members also discussed the 2013 Safety Director Seminar to be held January 15-17 at the Harrah's Convention Center in Council Bluffs, IA. (For more information on the conference, see page 2).

SOUTH DAKOTA -

Information on the new OSHA Hazard Communication (HazCom) Standard was presented during the July 18 meeting of the South Dakota Ag Cooperative Safety Directors Association (SDACSDA) in Mitchell, SD. Engineering Extension Safety and Health Consultant Mike Mommens explained that the new HazCom Standard will be coming into enforcement over the next few years.

Howalt McDowell Insurance provided information on better understanding aspects of workers compensation. The next meeting is scheduled for September 19.

IOWA -

Fifty-six members and guests attended the June 26 meeting of the Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Iowa (ACSDIA) at the Ag Information Center in Nevada, IA. Tim Knoll, with the USDOT, provided a presentation on the basics of CSA as a way to measure and address commercial motor vehicle safety. Perry Pelzer, with Craig's Restoration & Repair—a company that conducts welding procedures, inspections, and installations—utilized a visual presentation called "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" to uncover NH₃ problem areas, and Tom Dunn, with the Iowa Gas Association, demonstrated cathodic testing of underground propane tanks.

During the business portion of the meeting, Dennis Knight was elected as vice chairman, replacing Mark Hambleton, who stepped down. The next meeting will be September 11.