



SILO SAFETY COMPLIANCE PROJECT

OVERVIEW

Farmers and workers are seriously injured or killed every year while working on, or inside silos. The 3 biggest reasons are, falls from heights, being overcome by oxygen depleting fumes or dust in confined spaces, and, getting dragged into augers.

SafeWork NSW Inspectors visited 127 farms from December 2020 to April 2021 as part of a *Silo safety compliance project* to secure compliance and talk with farmers and workers about how to work safely on, or inside silos.

During the project, inspectors issued 151 notices, including 35 confined space notices, 37 machine guarding notices, 32 falls from heights notices and 22 electrical safety notices.

Inspectors checked compliance with managing falls from heights, working in confined spaces, machine guarding, auger guarding, electrical safety, emergency planning, fire and explosion risks, worker training and machine maintenance and inspection.

SafeWork NSW will continue to focus on silo safety as a key priority under the *Agriculture Work Health and Safety sector plan*.

BACKGROUND

The nature of work in the Agriculture industry makes it high risk and this is reflected in both the high rates of fatalities and serious worker's compensation claims.

In the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2019, 51 incidents were notified to SafeWork NSW related to work in or around silos of which 21 were serious injuries. An estimated 60 people are seriously injured each year on Australian farms using grain augers. In April 2020 a young worker had his leg amputated after it became entangled in an unguarded auger. Workers being overcome by fumes or dust from grains while working inside confined spaces has tragically led to several deaths since 2014 and 30 people have died on Australian farms in the last decade falling from heights.

SILO SAFETY COMPLIANCE PROJECT

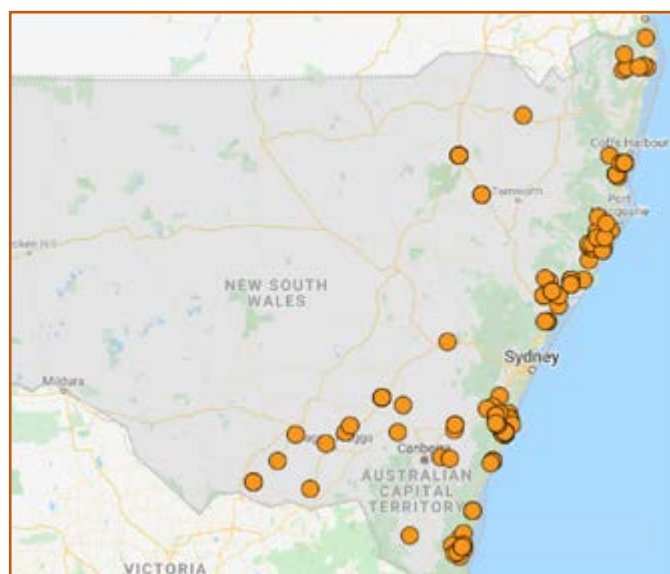
SafeWork NSW commenced a dedicated project on silo safety in May 2020. This included the development of a number of silo safety resources such as the 'Safe use of Silo's augers, field bins on farms self- assessment checklist' and a webinar to assist farmers work through the self-assessment checklist. Video safety alerts were created on the top 3 causes of injuries being falls from heights, working in confined spaces and auger safety.

SafeWork NSW undertook a targeted communications campaign to advise of the commencement of the silo safety project and to provide resources on how to be silo safe. Communications were disseminated through SafeWork NSW's website, an article in SafeWork NSW's the Wrap publication and through Inspector contact with NSW farmers. A Facebook social media campaign was undertaken highlighting the 3 video safety alerts which generated - 44,381 Reach and 80,239 Impressions.

SILO SAFETY SITE VISITS

As part of the Silo safety project, SafeWork NSW inspectors visited 127 farms state-wide. The site visit consisted of the Inspector working through the SafeWork NSW publication *Safe use of Silo's augers, field bins on farms self-assessment checklist* with the farmer and workers.

SafeWork NSW has Regional teams of Inspectors covering Hunter, Mid North Coast, Illawarra, South Coast, Northern NSW, Riverina-Murray and Central West. Below is a map which shows where the visits took place.



The farms visited ranged from poultry, sheep, beef and grain farms and were small (1-20) to medium (21-100) in employee numbers.

NOTICES ISSUED

Inspectors issued 151 notices, including 150 Improvement Notices and 1 Prohibition Notice. No Infringement Notices were issued.

PROHIBITION NOTICES

Table 1. Hazardous chemicals

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Manage Risks - PCBU	1

IMPROVEMENT NOTICES

Table 2. Plant

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Guarding - PMC	35
Manage risks - PMC	2
Total	37

Table 3. Confined spaces

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Entry permit - PCBU	1
General entry - PCBU	17
Risk assessment - PCBU	15
Training - PCBU	2
Total	35

Table 4. Falls

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Emergency/rescue - PCBU	4
Other - PCBU	24
Safe access/exit - PCBU	4
Total	32

Table 5. Electrical

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Inspection / testing - PCBU	14
Overhead and underground electric lines devices - PCBU	1
Residual current devices - PCBU	5
Unsafe equipment - PCBU	1
Untested electrical equipment - PCBU	1
Total	22

Table 6. General

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
General workplace management - information, training, instruction - PCBU	14
General Work Health and Safety Notice-primary duty of care - PCBU	1
Total	15

Table 7. Emergency plan

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Must prepare - PCBU	4

Table 8. Hazardous chemicals

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Safety equipment - PCBU	2
Manage risks - PCBU	2
Total	4

Table 9. Fire and explosion

Reason for Issue	Notices issued
Specific controls - PCBU	1

FINDINGS

Working in and around Silo's remains a significant risk on NSW farms. The aim of the silo farm safety compliance project was to:

- Educate farmers and secure compliance on the 3 main risks associated with silo's, being, falls from heights, being overcome by oxygen depleting fumes in confined spaces and, people getting dragged into augers.
- Educate farmers on SafeWork NSW resources and have them complete the *Safe use of Silo's augers, field bins on farms self-assessment checklist* May 2020.
- And to save lives by preventing incidents on farms that involve silos.

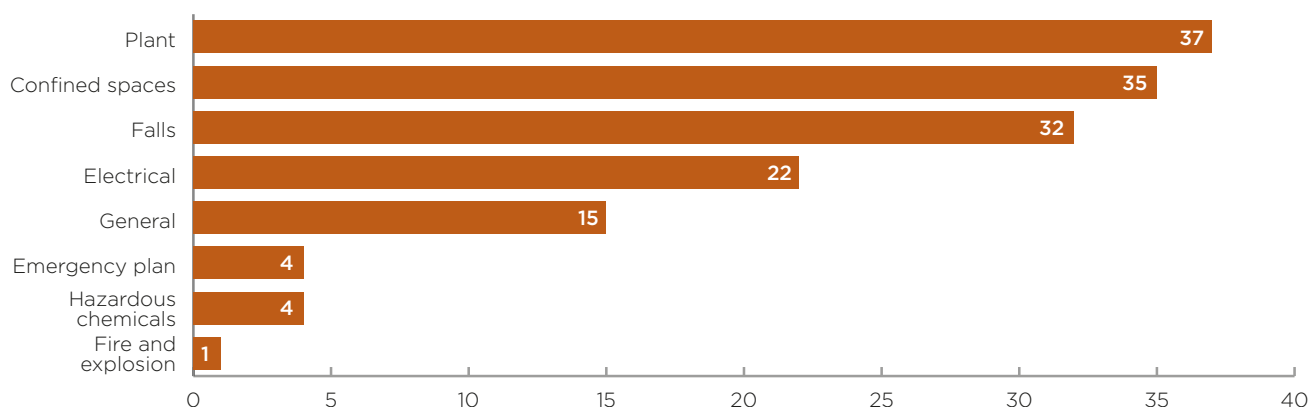
Inspector observations and compliance activity highlighted non-compliance issues in relation to the top 3 causes of silo incident being falls from heights, being overcome by oxygen depleting fumes or dust in confined spaces, and, getting dragged into augers.

Inspectors secured compliance by the provision of advice, information and through compliance activity of issuing Notices.

SafeWork will continue to work with major stakeholders and key influencers in industry through its state-wide dedicated regional team to increase awareness and improve overall standards and commitment to working safely in and around silos.

More safety information is available on the [SafeWork NSW website](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au).

Graph 1. Comparison of the type of improvement notices issued



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Catalogue No. SW09426
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