

Farm Safety During Harvest and Fall Work

Combines and corn heads are built for efficiency, but they demand respect. Always shut down engines and disengage power before attempting to clear blockages or make repairs. Keep shields in place and remind helpers never to approach running machinery. Fields often run late into the night; fatigue and poor lighting can turn routine tasks into dangerous ones.

Fall Tillage

Tillage equipment covers ground quickly but poses risks with sharp points, wide wings, and heavy frames. Keep bystanders—especially children—away from fields and machinery. When making adjustments or repairs, lower the equipment to the ground and relieve hydraulic pressure. Many farm injuries happen not from fieldwork itself, but from servicing equipment without proper precautions.



Grain Bin Safety

Grain handling is one of the most hazardous jobs in agriculture. Flowing grain can trap a person in seconds. Never enter a bin alone, and always wear a harness with a lifeline secured outside. Be certain unloading equipment is shut down before anyone steps inside. Grain dust is another risk; use masks or respirators to limit exposure and reduce fire hazards.

Fire Preparedness in the Field

Dry crop residue and hot engines create real fire danger during harvest. Carry a fire extinguisher on every combine, tractor, and grain cart. In high-risk conditions, keep a water tank or nurse truck nearby—having a water source ready can prevent a small spark from becoming a field-wide disaster. Take time each evening to blow off chaff and debris from engines and belts to reduce ignition risk.



Hauling Crops

Moving grain and silage by truck or wagon increases road traffic during harvest. Check lights, reflectors, and slow-moving vehicle emblems before heading out. Use pilot vehicles or hazard flashers on busy highways. Fatigue is especially dangerous on the road—rotate drivers when possible and avoid hauling late at night. Patience and preparation keep everyone safe.

This fall, remember: crops can be replaced, but people cannot. Taking extra time for safe harvest, tillage, grain handling, fire prevention, and hauling practices ensures that everyone makes it home to their families when the season ends.

References:

- National Ag Safety Database (NASD). "Grain Bin Safety." nasdonline.org
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). "Agricultural Safety." cdc.gov/niosh/agforfish

Combine Preparation: Ready for Corn & Soybean Harvest

As the season turns toward harvest, making sure combines are in top working order is one of the most important steps for success in both corn and soybeans. A well-prepped machine not only protects yield but also keeps downtime—and costly headaches—out of your harvest window.

Before rolling into the field, give your combine a thorough inspection. Check belts, chains, bearings, and drives for wear. Replace worn parts now, not when they fail mid-field. Ensure shields and guards are in place, and grease all fittings according to manufacturer specs.



Settings Matter: Soybeans vs. Corn

- **Soybeans:** With green stems and pods common at harvest, knife sections and guards must be sharp to reduce shatter losses. Reel speed should match ground speed, and cutterbar height should be set for maximum pod capture.
- **Corn:** Calibrate snapping rolls and deck plates to reduce ear loss. Adjust concave clearance and rotor/cylinder speed to minimize kernel damage while still threshing cleanly.

Grain Handling & Fire Prevention

Clean out grain tanks, elevators, and augers to remove old debris. Rodents and trash left from last season can cause fires or contamination. During harvest, keep an eye on bearings and belts that generate heat—many fall fires begin this way. A small water tank or fire extinguisher mounted on the combine or grain cart is a wise safeguard.

Electronics & Calibration

Today's combines rely heavily on yield monitors and precision technology. Calibrate yield sensors in each crop to ensure accurate harvest data for decision making. Double-check GPS systems and software updates before heading to the field.

Safety First

Good preparation isn't only about machine efficiency—it's about protecting those operating it. Test lights, slow-moving vehicle signs, and mirrors before hauling down the road. A few extra minutes on safety now can prevent serious accidents later.

Every hour of harvest counts. By taking time to prepare combines specifically for corn and soybeans, growers can save yield, avoid breakdowns, and ensure a smooth harvest season.

References:

- University of Nebraska Extension – Combine Settings for Corn & Soybeans
- Iowa State University Extension – Pre-Harvest Combine Maintenance



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