

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Safety Tips: Safety Suggestions
for Fish Farm Workers*

Aquaculture, due to the nature of the industry, poses many potential problems for agricultural safety and health. Fish farming has the same type of hazards as other types of agriculture, but additionally it has the added challenge of hazards associated with water impoundments and night time work.

Carelessness is the No.1 cause of farm accidents. As I have learned over the years that no matter at the number and content of safety talks, verbal presentations or handouts you can't cover acts of carelessness that result in accidents. We shall discuss a few ideas for safety for fish farmers and workers in this issue that, hopefully, might save a debilitating injury.

ELECTRIC HAZARDS –

- Electricity burns as it enters and passes through the body and can tear tissue as it leaves the body.
- Our bodies are a better conductor than grass, trees, soil, air or tires.
- Electricity will take the easiest path to the ground which could be the body.
- Know what you are doing, stay focused and be extra cautious around power lines and electric wires.

LIVE POWER LINES-

- High voltage power lines are extremely dangerous. The federal law requires one to maintain a distance of at least 10 feet of clearance between you and the power line.
- Don't gamble on the distance if you're not sure. Ask a fellow worker that might have a better angle at the distance than you.
- If a boom truck or tractor is touching or in contact with a live wire- do not leave it. Move the vehicle away from the wire if it isn't hooked.
- Do not attempt to move power lines with a pipe or pole. Wood or PVC pipe will conduct electricity; especially in damp or dirty conditions.
- Do not step to the ground, don't touch the soil and equipment at the same time. **YOU COULD BE ELECTROCUTED.**

DAMAGED POWER LINES & WIRES-

- Lightning often damages outside electric control devices and motors, with no visible signs of damage. However, these devices could be energized and/or shorted, posing a serious electrical shock.
- Take extra precaution after a lightning storm –test control boxes with a tester before touching them.
- When doing pond work, make sure that the circuit is off and padlocked before entering the water. Check with a circuit tester before starting maintenance. If the motor doesn't start contact your supervisor or call an electrician. If you have any doubts, call your supervisor!

DOWNED POWER LINES-

- Always assume that downed power lines are “hot.” Soil can transmit voltage and you can be electrocuted by a downed “hot” wire without even touching it. Stay at least 20 feet from a downed power line.
- Call your utility supplier to disconnect power and fix downed lines.
- If you're in a pond when a line is knocked down- leave immediately and stay as far away as possible.
- Always report broken or poorly insulated lines. Anytime there are doubts-turn off the electricity or disconnect the breaker.
- Always try to keep the circuits and equipment in good order.

PTO SAFETY AND SETTING AERATORS-

- Never disengage and hold the clutch with the engine running and the transmission in gear.
- Before you start a tractor- look around the area and shout out “CLEAR!” - Then wait a few seconds to make sure everyone is clear. Do the same if you're raising or lowering implements.
- Do not operate machinery without checking the PTO shields, replace the damaged ones. The time and cost of maintaining the guards and shields is small compared to an injury or possible death to an employee.
- The only time you should leave the tractor with the PTO engaged is to set an aerator.
- Always put the tractor in park, lock the brakes, and a good idea is to chock the back wheels.
- Dismounting the tractor- stay way clear of the aerator- walk in front of the tractor and not behind. Do not attempt to cross over a rotating PTO shaft. Do not move too close to a rotating PTO shaft. If you should get your clothes caught, you could have a serious injury.

PRACTICAL TIPS-

- Distribution and circuit breaker boxes are extremely dangerous when Hot. The power is available in 120, 240, or 480 volts.
- Make sure when you are close to a circuit box, stand to the side, facing away from it, and switch the power with the hand closest to the power to disconnect.
- Waders or rubber farm boots won't insulate you from those voltages. The contacts can arc and flash with enough force to blow the door off the box and burn your face.
- Be careful when moving tall ladders, pipes, or antennas around overheard power lines.
- Disconnect power and locate buried lines before digging. Electric cables near or below ground level should be in conduit for their protection.

NIGHT OPERATION-

- Night operations can be more hazardous at night. Vision and judgment is worse at night.
- Get familiar with feeding levels and the best pond routes (check in daylight). Stay off of narrow, slick levels at night.
- Check all shop and tractor lights that they are good working order.
- It's a good idea to work in pairs when moving aerators at night.
- Practice backing aerators into ponds during daylight.
- When backing aerator equipment into a pod at night, remember:
~Use the tractor lights and have a person on hand with a hand –held light is also a wise idea.
- Position the tractor with the PTO shaft as straight as possible and move back slowly so you don't gamble on damaging the shaft.
- Put the tractor in park and apply the brakes.
- Idle the tractor down, engage the PTO and slowly increase the throttle until the aerator is turning at the proper speed.

WORKING SAFELY AROUND SEINE REELS-

- Working around seine reels can be dangerous. The tractor has to be moved and repositioned many times. Crew members must be alert that the driver doesn't back over someone. Keep your hands clear of the net and reel when pulling the seine. You could get them caught and pulled into the reel or crush your hands or arm between the reel and metal frame.

Obviously this is “hitting the high points,” of fish working safety, but using these tips, applying it in your work will surely be advantageous.

PENCILS HAVE ERASERS-

MISHAPS DON'T!

SAFE CRANE OPERATION IS UPLIFTING!!!

Ted Gordon – Risk Mgmt. /Loss Control Mgr.

MAFES/MSU-EXTENSION (662) 566-2201

Excerpts: <http://nasdonline.org/4698/e000029/m-s-u-extension-svchtml>

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