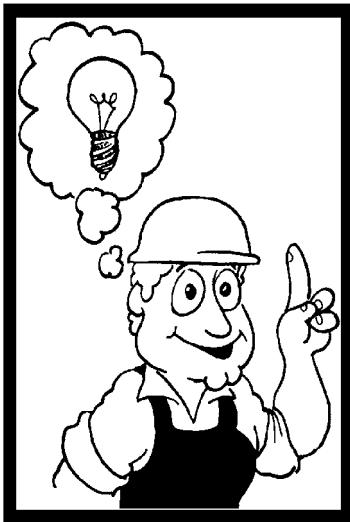


TECH TIPS

Volume 5
January 2004

SAFETY SYSTEMS

.....ARE THEY SAFE?



With grain handling and processing systems becoming more complex, it is understandable that operators rely on “automatic” devices to assure that their grain and processing facilities are operating properly.

Automatic safety devices and operational controls are designed to increase efficiency and reduce the risk of grain loss or contamination. Level indicators, limit switches, position indicators, speed switches, temperature sensors, indicator lights and motor interlocks are but a few of the devices that are often used to “assure”

the operator that the facility is functioning properly. Usually, these devices are tested and are completely functional at the time they are installed. However, that does not guarantee that they will work properly forever. Operators must understand that safe and efficient operations are their responsibility.

Unfortunately, it is often assumed that any problems with the handling system would be detected by these “automatic” devices..... and we all know what they say about the word “assume”. Limiting inspections and preventative maintenance merely to the “mechanical” items of the handling and processing system can lead to a potential hazardous situation or a costly sense of security.

“Automatic devices” are often mechanically actuated, even though they are electrically connected. Like any other mechanical device, they can fatigue and fail after years of repetitive operation. To be 100% certain that these devices are functioning, periodic tests to verify proper operation should be performed as part of a regular inspection and maintenance program.

Every operator should be familiar with the types of control and safety devices in the facility and how they operate. This will enable them to have each device effectively checked to verify its proper operation. These devices are vitally important to the modern grain handling and processing facility, but remember..... the goal is to have safety systems that **ARE**, not safety systems that **AREN'T**.