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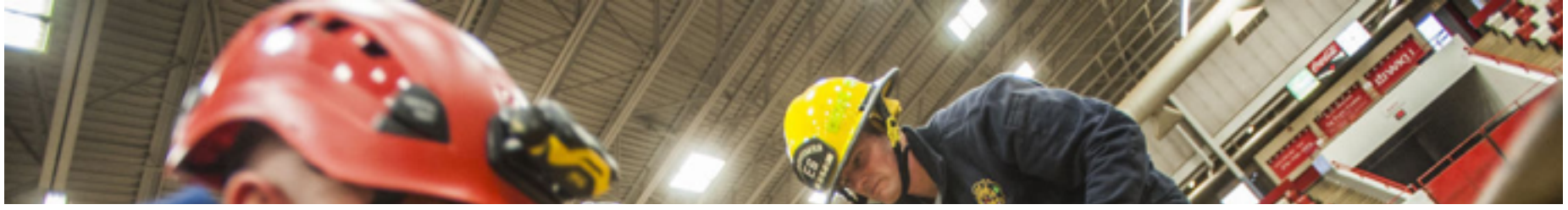
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TOP STORY

Firefighters get waist-deep in farm rescue training

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com Jan 27, 2018





Warren County volunteer firefighter Tyler Scudder dove waist-deep into his safety training Saturday morning.

Scudder, with the Browning Fire Department, sunk to his beltline in corn as part of farm safety training for all Warren County fire departments Saturday at the Western Kentucky University Agriculture Exposition Center.

The training, using new “turtle tubes” purchased for all nine of the county’s volunteer fire departments by Warren County Farm Bureau, was geared toward helping firefighters learn how to use that equipment to rescue farm workers who might get trapped in a grain bin.

Coming less than a year after a grain-bin death in the Plum Springs area, the training was timely.

“We probably have hundreds of grain bins in the county, so it’s bound to happen,” said Scudder, 23. “We might as well have the training to get them rescued.”

Dale Dobson, safety administrator for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, and WKU agriculture mechanics professor Chris Scudder conducted the training, telling the 40 or so firefighters at the morning session that more than 100 persons have died in grain-bin accidents over the past seven years. Farm workers can die of suffocation as they sink into the grain, they explained.

After his experience in the grain bin set up in the indoor arena, Tyler Scudder is a believer.

“You can sit and talk about how it’s hard to get out of the grain, but you don’t realize the force that’s on you until you’re actually in it,” he said. “I couldn’t move my legs. I had to have the rescue equipment to get me out.”

Scudder’s fellow firefighters put the flexible plastic tube around him and used an auger device to remove the grain that was pressing in on him. They were then able to lift him out.

The firefighters also learned about using crates and other devices for moving around in grain bins without sinking themselves or creating more pressure on the victim, and they learned proper techniques for cutting V-shaped openings in the sides of bins to allow grain to run out in extreme cases where the victim isn’t visible.

Craig Peay, assistant chief of the Gott Volunteer Fire Department, said the turtle tubes are great tools.

“They’re very efficient for getting to the person,” he said. “Using plywood or a metal tube takes some time. With this, you just unroll it. We’re trying to be better and more efficient in our rescue efforts.”

After his first-hand experience, Tyler Scudder agrees the turtle tube can be a great device to help with grain-bin rescues.

“It’s easy to store on the truck, and you can put it together rapidly,” he explained. “One person can carry it.”

Denny Page, a Farm Bureau board of directors member who helped make the decision to spend the \$11,000 to buy the tubes, was on hand for the training and said he sees the tubes as a wise investment.

“If it saves one life, we figure it has been a big help,” he said. “They (firefighters) are learning what they need to do to get people out of grain bins.”



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As he watched the firefighters practice with the tubes, Page said the Farm Bureau might invest in other equipment that can help with grain-bin or other farm rescues.

“I’m sure we’ll buy some more equipment,” he said. “We just need to know what they need and we’ll help all we can.”

Saturday’s training was part of a decadeslong strategy of trying to prevent farm accidents and deaths, according to Dobson. He said farm-related deaths in the state ran as high as 50 per year in the early 1990s. That number is now down to less than 20.

“It’s extremely important to put firefighters and farmers together,” Dobson said. “A lot of times their worlds don’t meet until there’s a disaster.

“This (training) gets firefighters out in a grain bin so that when something does happen they’re ready. The biggest part of my job is getting farmers and firefighters together.

“There’s a big education element with farmers, teaching them to never enter a grain bin without a rope and harness. They don’t need to put themselves in danger.”

Dobson applauded the Farm Bureau for purchasing the turtle tubes that will be used in emergencies.

“The Farm Bureau has stepped up and taken the lead by buying these tubes,” he said. “I hope they’re never needed.”

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