**Harvest safety should be top-of-mind for [INSERT CO-OP NAME] farmers**

Harvest time. For those who make their living off the land here in Tennessee, it’s the big payback, the reward for all those hours of hard work out in the fields. When you finally get to reap the bounty of all your efforts to make the land produce, it can be incredibly satisfying. But, as [INSERT NAME OF CO-OP]’s Safety Coordinator [OR SIMILAR TITLE] reminds us, it's also a time where extra vigilance is warranted.

“Any farmer will quickly tell you that there’s a lot that goes into bringing in a crop,” says [NAME]. “Putting forth such a focused effort within a relatively brief time period requires long hours and intense involvement from all concerned. With so much happening at once, it might be easy to forget that there are potential — and very real — risks of accidental electrical contact associated with harvesting.”

Farmers who produce corn, wheat and barley often rely on portable metal augers to move grain from one location to another. The process of moving these augers from one place to another is probably the farming activity that carries with it the single greatest risk of electrocution. Every year, serious accidents or even fatalities occur when this piece of equipment contacts high-voltage power lines after being improperly moved in the elevated position.

An East Tennessee man died back in 2014 when he was attempting to blow feed grain from his tanker truck into a silo and the truck’s boom came in contact with overhead power lines. Other ag-related electrocutions have occurred in connection with tractors with front-end loaders, irrigation pipes, fold-up cultivators, combines and extension ladders.

“Here at [NAME OF CO-OP],” says [NAME], “we are extremely proud of the rich agricultural legacy of our area, and we want all our farmers to bring in their crops while staying safe around electricity. The best way to do that is to make sure everyone involved in farming operations is aware of the hazards.”

Each year, an average of around 62 farm workers in the U.S. are electrocuted, according to the National Ag Safety Database. To make sure you’re not one of them, here are some helpful recommendations.

* Conduct a survey of your property to identify locations of overhead and underground power lines. Document and inform family members, farm managers, equipment operators and workers (including seasonal laborers) of these sites, outlining safety procedures when moving portable grain augers and operating other types of farming equipment.
* When transferring grain to or from a dryer, truck, wagon or storage bin, always lower the auger to a horizontal position for safe transportation. This not only prevents it from contacting overhead power lines but also reduces the risk of a tip-over accident during transport.
* Consider affixing signage to your equipment as an additional reminder of the potential danger of moving the auger in an upright position. Place a hazard sign in a conspicuous location on the grain auger to alert workers of the potential for injury or death from electrocution.
* Barns and livestock houses are dusty, moist and subject to corrosion. Use waterproof, dustproof and explosion-proof electrical boxes, outlets and motors in these areas to ensure safe and reliable electricity.
* Call the co-op to determine transport and clearance height for farm equipment. Never attempt to measure line heights yourself. We can also help locate underground power lines at no cost to you. Refer to this information before commencing any projects involving digging/earth-moving.
* If a vehicle you are operating comes in contact with an overhead power line, stay in the cab and call 911; dispatchers will notify [INSERT NAME OF CO-OP] so that we can quickly de-energize the line. If you must exit the vehicle in the event of a fire, do not step down onto the ground. Electrical current can flow through the vehicle and energize the ground up to 100 feet away from the point of contact. Jump clear — as far as possible — and keep others away. Shuffle slowly away from where you landed when you jumped, avoiding lifting either foot completely off the ground for at least 100 feet. By shuffling, the current flow through your body from the energized ground is greatly reduced.
* Provide safety training for all workers, including seasonal laborers. Everyone involved in your farming operations should know what to do in an electrical emergency.

If you have questions or concerns about operating farm machinery in proximity to power lines or any other aspect of electrical safety, please contact [INSERT NAME AND NUMBER OF CO-OP SAFETY COORDINATOR]. Have a safe and successful harvest!