

Farm Forum

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caster County two children went into a partially-filled silo to throw down haylage that had been put in the day before, and even though the blower had been run for twenty minutes with the distributor snout in the down position, both died from the same gasses that nearly killed Fred Shankle. Other deaths and injuries have occurred

over the years, too.

We must become better educated on gasses so that we KNOW WHAT TO DO to PREVENT such accidents.

First, the gas was NOT methane gas as the captions under the pictures said. Methane gas is lighter than air and escapes out the top of non-oxygen-limiting silos. Danger from methane gas exists in

closed-top manure pits with openings into an enclosed area. It is NEVER a danger with open silos.

The gasses that Fred Shankle nearly succumbed to on October 19, and the two boys here in Lancaster, were the non-flammable gasses that are HEAVIER than air! In Fred's case, if he had taken one step UP the silo chute instead of going DOWN, he could have avoided the tragedy, initially, unless the wind was blowing air up the silo chute, which it was not doing that day. However, a better choice would have been to have opened the 15th door immediately after filling the previous day to

allow the gasses to escape instead of collecting in the partially-filled silo. (Always put a tag on the blower and tractor to prevent someone from filling without looking in the silo! More than once farmers have restarted the filling without looking in and had some expensive and time-consuming repairs as a result!) Nitrogenous gasses are usually yellowish in color, and in heavier concentrations, brownish. But fatal levels could exist with no smell or visible color at all. Carbon monoxide is also a product of fermentation and is colorless, and fatal!

So far I have never seen a reasonably-sized compressed air tank that could be taken into a silo for the few minutes that it may be necessary to go in each day during filling, so we need to educate safety equipment specialists to provide them!

For many years full face mask apparatus have been available for the application of anhydrous ammonia on corn silage, and for mid-winter opening of capped

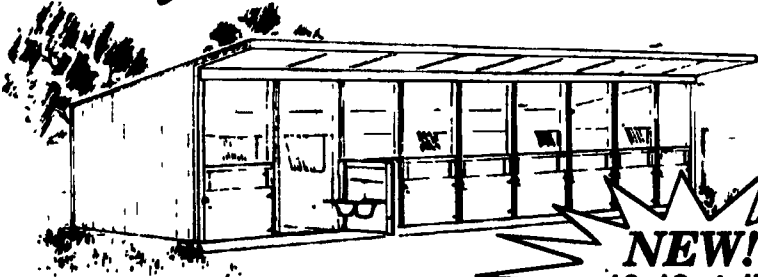
silos where mold spores can be as extremely hazardous as gasses at filling time! It would not be very difficult for manufacturers to design a hose and tank for farm use. I have never yet heard a reasonable excuse for not having them available, at a reasonable price!

Each incident like the Shankle story brings us farmers closer to having regulations forced upon us, and we must respond by getting better education and by pushing for the right equipment to be made to protect our health and safety! It would also be very much a tragedy if we were not taught about biological hazards in schools and colleges and by extension agents and farm safety specialists, so let's help them do their job by encouraging them and by joining groups like FARM SAFETY 4 JUST KIDS, related to the national SAFE KIDS campaign. County groups are springing up across Pennsylvania, and they need our help to prevent unreasonable regulations from being forced upon us by well-meaning but non-farm regulators! JOIN UP!

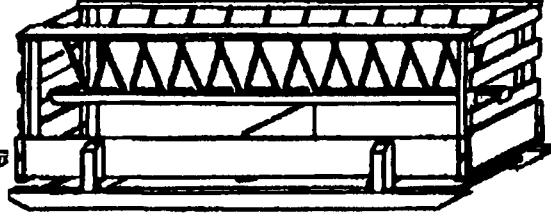
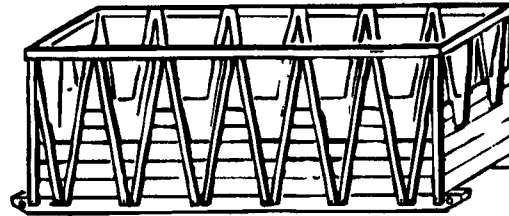
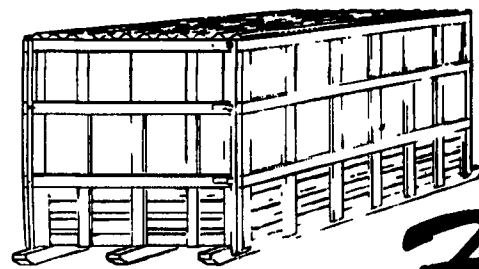
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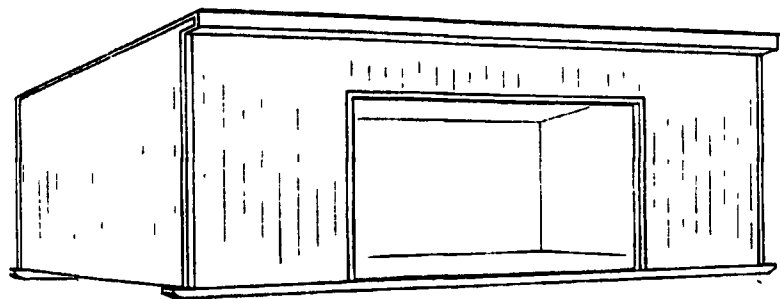
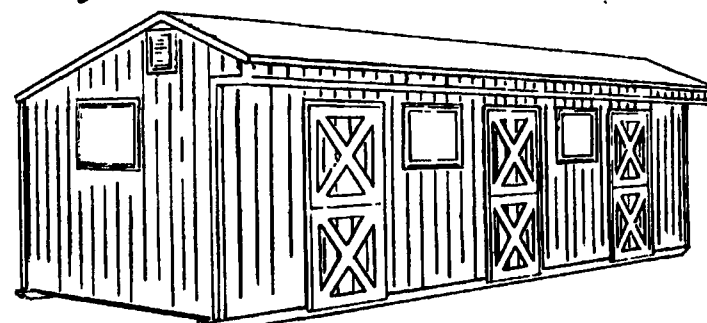
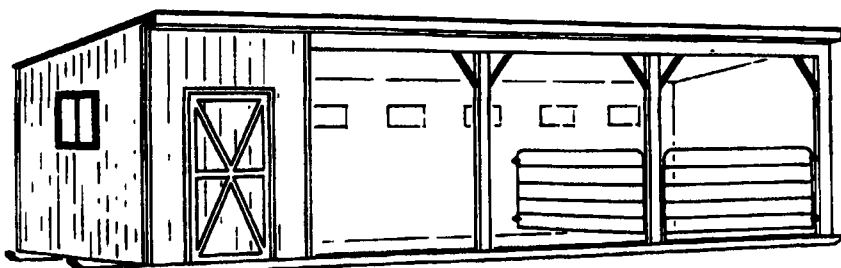


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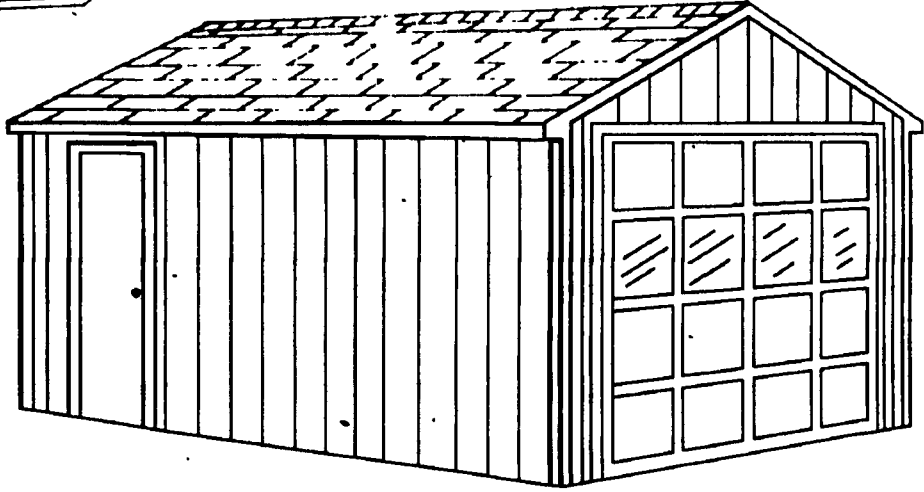
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