



Silo – a rescue movie filmed in Sukup bins

Watching a teenager frantically pushing grain away from himself, as he's sinking deeper into corn, is terrifying even if you know it's just a scene from a movie.

'Silo: Edge of the Real World' is a "meditation on life in a small Midwest farm town when a grain entrapment shocks a community," says the film maker on silothefilm.com.

"Inspired by true events, Silo spans one long day on a small farm in Middle America: a day that begins like any other when a mother wrangles her two teenage sons out of bed and sends them off to a neighbour's corn farm to lend a hand and learn a trade they will likely inherit. But a combination of carelessness and bad luck lead to an all-too-common tragedy felt by grain farmers across the country."

For those who have lost a family member to grain entrapment, it might be too much to see, Diane Hughes, sales director at Sukup Manufacturing said quietly after watching on a monitor during filming in North Iowa, USA.

Inspired by true events, the yet-to-be-named movie depicts 24 hours in a small Midwestern farming community where, due to carelessness and bad luck, a young farmhand gets trapped in a grain bin and rescuers struggle to get him out.

It's a scenario that is repeated too often on family farms, but not one that a lot of people outside know about, said the movie's New York-based producer, Samuel Goldberg, after a director pitched the idea to him four years ago, screenwriting began.

Two years ago when scouting out filming locations, Goldberg learned about Sukup Manufacturing and asked the family-owned company to design bins that could be used for filming. Goldberg met with Steve Sukup, vice-

president and chief financial officer, and his daughter Emily Schmitt, general counsel, to get the project rolling.

Sukup Manufacturing designed and built a 42-foot diameter, six-ring bin for filming in a Sukup Steel Buildings-designed hangar at North Iowa Air Service in Mason City, Iowa, about 25 miles from the company's headquarters in Sheffield, Iowa.

The bin roof was fortified to support lighting and other equipment. Four sidewall panels were left out to provide access for a camera boom and other equipment. Flooring was modified to give the effect that there was about 15-foot of grain in the bin. In addition, the set included a partial bin roof for above-the-bin scenes.

Sukup Manufacturing also designed a 42 foot diameter 12-ring bin at the main filming site on a farm in Kentucky. The movie is expected to be released next summer.

Awareness

The opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of safety when handling grain is what interested Sukup family members in helping with the film.

In talking with Goldberg, "you could see he was passionate about the topic and the movie," Sukup said. Throughout the farming community it's often hard to talk about grain entrapment because so many people have been hurt or killed, he said.

Besides focusing on a way of life that most people really don't know, the movie "will be something that people can really learn from."

Goldberg said he knew nothing about grain entrapment four years ago. The more he learned, the more he became interested in doing a feature film on the topic. The extensive research included interviews with multiple

grain entrapment experts and meetings with entrapment survivors and with families who have lost members in grain bin accidents, he said.

Since 1964, a total of 1156 farm workers have died in confined spaces, including more than 200 teenage boys, according to silothefilm.com, the website for a short documentary that Goldberg and his team produced to market the full-length film. The filmmakers are still seeking a title for the longer film, acknowledging that ‘silo’ was a bit of a misnomer. Grain tanks are called silos in some regions, but are mainly called grain bins throughout the United States.

While there will be dramatic effects to carry the story, Goldberg said, the film will be well-grounded in agriculture, depicting the love and promise of farming as well as the danger.

“Film is an amazing empathy-producing medium,” said Goldberg, whose previous productions include *Mildred & The Dying Parlor* (2016), *The Heart Machine* (2014), and *The Last Survivor* (2010).

“We hope this wakes people up to the dangers of farming,” he said, adding that a portion of the film’s proceeds will be donated to farm-safety causes.

Goldberg said the more he learned about the Sukup family, the more he wanted to work with them. “I know the Sukups are very passionate about farm safety and very loyal to the farming community,” Goldberg said.

Commemoration

A bin sidewall panel commemorating the late Eugene Sukup, founder of Sukup Manufacturing, was signed by every crew member and was presented to the Sukup family at the conclusion of filming in Mason City.

Sukup Manufacturing Co. is the world’s largest family-owned and operated grain storage, drying and handling equipment manufacturer. The company is headquartered in Sheffield, Iowa, and covers 1,000,000 sq. ft. of office, manufacturing and warehouse space. The company employs more than 600 people, making it one of the largest employers in North Central Iowa. Three generations of the family are now active in the business. Sukup products are sold throughout the U.S. and Canada, as well as more than 80 foreign countries.

The movie is to be released in the summer of 2019.

