



Ms. O'Conner has over 14 years of experience managing and reviewing information systems audits. She has worked as a manager with the Price Waterhouse Office of Government Services, as a GS-14 Federal employee, and as a technical consultant with KPMG, among other positions. Pam received her undergraduate degree, with a major in Accountancy, from the University of Central Florida. She is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Internal Auditor, and a Certified Information Systems Auditor. She returned to Purdue to pursue graduate work in agricultural systems management.



Agricultural & Biological ENGINEERING

Thesis Defense

Speaker: Pamela S. O'Conner

Title: The Economic Impact Of Extending OSHA's Grain Handling Standards To Currently Exempt Agricultural Worksites

Major Professor(s): Dr. William E. Field

Date: Monday, April 16, 2012

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: ABE 212

Abstract:

Historically, approximately 70% of grain-related incidents occur on farms, with the other 30% occurring at commercial facilities. However, most farms that have on-site storage structures are currently exempt from OSHA compliance as a result of OSHA's Agricultural Exemption. This research project attempted to estimate the cost of compliance of a convenient sample of seven representative currently exempt on-farm grain storage facilities with 43 selected workplace safety and health OSHA standards requirements that were deemed most applicable to grain handling facilities. An assessment tool was developed to gather information on those requirements that were judged as being reasonable for currently exempt on-farm grain storage facilities, and on-site visits were conducted. The cost analysis showed that a legislative change of this magnitude, assuming, for instance, a per-farm implementation expenditure of \$6,000, would result in a total first-year cost to the nation's 309,000-plus farms with on-farm grain storage of over \$1.85 billion (not including the cost of bin retrofit). Consequently, the findings presented support the belief that the economic impact of compliance would be excessive.

Application:

The Grain Handling Facilities and Permit Required Confined Spaces Standards have been effective in reducing fatalities and injuries at non-exempt (commercial) storage facilities. However, there has been an increase in the number of incidents at exempt (non-commercial) storage facilities: as a result, there appears to be growing interest among policy makers and government officials (especially those within OSHA) in removing the Agricultural Exemption from the agency's Section 1910 standards. Farmers have traditionally argued that they could not afford the cost of OSHA compliance. Research showed the cost of compliance would be very high – a possible first-year cost of \$1.85 billion.