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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PREVENT GRAIN BIN DEATHS

Implement 100% of safety procedures

How important is it to implement every step of a safety procedure?

Jason Weston's Nebraska City family say one small misstep at a Prosser, NE, grain elevator in March 2016 cost Jason his life. His mother, Linda Weston, says her cautious, hard working son was put in danger when the volume of dust in a grain bin caused a standby employee to step outside the bin and allow Jason to be out of his sight.

"From initial OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) reports I've read, Jason was wearing the safety harness and observing necessary safety precautions for working in the bin," Linda says. "He was using a pole to unclog an auger in a bin of soybeans. The person watching him stepped out of the bin because of the highly dusty conditions. Jason's harness became tangled in the running auger and he was dragged down into the beans, where he suffocated."

The third oldest of seven children, Jason was a successful student who rarely missed school, graduating in the upper 10% of his class. During school, he was a member of the National Honor Society, was active in football and track and a state contender in wrestling.

At the University of Nebraska, Jason joined the Reserved Officer's Training Corps (ROTC) and subsequently spent 12 years in the military, serving in Bosnia and Iraq. In completing his basic training at Fort Knox, KY, Jason graduated as "Top Soldier," receiving the Draper Armor Leadership Award.

"He loved his country, he was very hard worker, but he also loved his family very much," Linda says. "He took his babies for their shots and checkups. He attended parent teacher conferences and many other things. He was a wonderful father."

In high school, at the age of 16, Jason bought and restored a 1967 Mustang. Over time, he also owned a Trans Am and brand new Camaro. But when his children came along, Jason gave up his cars, purchasing a mini van.

When Jason started working, in addition to his role as a husband and father, he committed to completing a bachelor's degree. His mother believes his highly self-disciplined and structured approach to life allowed him to accomplish so much.

Jason's youngest sister, in searching for ways to deal with her grief when Jason died, found the United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities (USMWF). There she found support from others who have lost family members in workplace accidents and resources to help in the family's healing process.

Jason's widow, Allison, says the sense of loss she and Jason's family have experienced has gone very deep. If there is some solace the family can find, it

will be in knowing that the story about Jason's death helps agricultural workers recognize the importance of working in a safe way without attempting to take any shortcuts.

"I think Jason's death is an important illustration that we can't afford to miss any part of a safety process," Allison says. "In the grain business, this is an example of how quickly something can go wrong. Everyone involved must follow the rules or this is the kind of thing that can result."

Jason's family notes that the company where he worked had been previously cited for negligence. That knowledge intensifies their sense of loss.

"It should never have happened," Allison says. "Jason's death has opened everyone's eyes as to how something unexpected can happen so quickly. You see and hear stories about this kind of thing on the news and you never think it can happen to you. But it did happen to us. All of us in Jason's family realize now more than ever just how important every day with our loved ones is. We never know when something can go wrong."

Jason's family has established a small memorial near the grain facility to help raise awareness of how dangerous grain bin work can be. They hope passersby are reminded of the need to work safely in every workplace every day.

Since Jason's death, Linda is more aware than ever that grain bins can quickly become death traps. Whether it's grain bin deaths or serious injuries, Linda and Jason's family hope to see a reduction in similar accidents in the future.

"I wonder, with all the robotic capabilities we have these days, why we're still sending men into these grain facilities," Linda says. "It seems there should be a better way to approach this kind of work. I also have concerns that the lock-out/tag-out requirements for grain bin augers aren't being

enforced, because you hear about people being inside bins when augers are running. And that's what happened to Jason. If there had been a third person there to shut down the auger it might have saved him."

Jason's family would like to see a review of grain bin safety procedures to determine if the processes need to be updated and improved. Sadly, no action will bring him back to his family.

"For Jason's sake, we hope there's more awareness of how dangerous this industry is," Linda says. "The investigation showed that he did everything right, and it's hard to understand how this could happen anyway. Jason was one who never gave up, and we won't stop telling his story to try and help other people avoid this kind of event."

Jason's family will always remember him as being proud, determined, responsible and loving.

"If you needed help, he was there," Linda says. "We are thankful we had the blessing and honor to be his parents. We miss him terribly. If anything good can come out of this, we hope it's a safer grain industry work place and greater awareness that any workplace can be dangerous. Going to work shouldn't be a grave mistake."