



Don't be a blockhead

Each year, farmers are injured or killed when they use the wrong items for blocking or cribbing equipment while making repairs. Farm equipment has become so large and heavy that supporting it with inappropriate items such as cement blocks can lead to collapse of the equipment causing the worker to be crushed underneath.

The best way to support a machine or heavy component of a machine is by using the supports provided by the manufacturer for that purpose. Most front-end loaders come with locks that hold the loader in the raised position, combine headers have safety header locks, and heavy tillage equipment may be designed to “come over center” preventing it from falling. There are times however when additional support or cribbing is needed, such as working on a tire or sharpening blades on a rotary mower. The most appropriate device to support a load is a jack stand of the correct load capacity. A cement block, regardless of how accessible it is, should never be used to support the weight of a piece of farm machinery.

In this activity, participants will be clearly shown why cement blocks should never be used in place of jack stands or blocks of wood intended specifically for use as cribbing.

Procedure:

1. Lay a piece of cardboard on the floor
2. Place a standard cement block on its side on the cardboard.
3. Over the block lay a heavy piece of plastic or tarp (to catch flying pieces).
4. Using a large shop hammer or sledgehammer, strike that side of the block a few times.
5. Remove the protective cover and examine the results. In most cases, the block has broken into several pieces.
6. Ask the participants whether or not they would feel safe working under a machine being supported by that block. A good rule to impress on them is to **NEVER USE A CEMENT BLOCK AS A JACK STAND.**

Materials Needed



Piece of cardboard



Cement block



Tarp



Sledge hammer



Jack stand (optional)