

## **USDA DEDICATES MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO HONOR VICTIMS OF GRAIN ELEVATOR EXPLOSIONS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11, 2002 -- Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jim Moseley today commemorated the passing of 13 employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration who died in the line of duty in two grain elevator explosions in 1977 by dedicating a memorial plaque.

The plaque will be located on 12th Street, S.W., between Independence Avenue and Jefferson Drive, on the grounds of USDA's Jamie L. Whitten Building.

On Dec. 22, 1977, seven employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service, today part of USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), were killed when a grain elevator near New Orleans, La., exploded in what was the worst accident of its kind in the nation's history. Overall, 36 people died and millions of dollars in property were destroyed. Only five days later, on Dec. 27, 1977, a grain elevator in Galveston, Texas, exploded killing 18, including six USDA employees.

"Today we honor the memory of our 13 colleagues who lost their lives on two catastrophic days 25 years ago," Moseley said. "While we mourn their loss, we are grateful that from this tragedy grew joint public and private efforts that have made grain elevators safer workplaces for employees both of USDA and the U.S. grain industry."

Others attending the ceremony include, Bill Hawks, under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs, GIPSA Administrator Donna Reifschneider and GIPSA Deputy Administrator David Shipman.

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