

# Solutions for Excellence

## Handling Procedures

The shipping and handling process of the Red River Valley Potato Growers is a great demonstration of how all wash plants and warehouses should be in the country. Traveling throughout the Red River Valley shipping operations, one can easily see these impressive technologically, advanced facilities and impressive practices being implemented.

Before the crops are harvested and stored, information of new storage and handling procedures is gathered. Grower education to the Red River Valley is a continuous process that takes place year round. Armed with new information and data, shippers relay their findings to their growers and their employees via e-mail, grower meetings, and newsletters. Ninety percent of the operators in the Red River Valley attend meetings and workshops to help them improve their operations. Other informational sources the shippers utilize are magazines, the Internet, the Red River Valley Potato Growers Association, and researchers such as Duane Preston.

Operational cleanliness is heavily enforced; in over 50 percent of the wash plants gloves are enforced and in one plant they hold the AIB standards in their practices. This should give all consumers a good feeling, knowing that when they are purchasing a bag of potatoes from the Red River Valley, they are purchasing quality potatoes.

When taken from the field and placed in the storage units, they have been carefully handled to prevent bruising. The belts that the potatoes travel on while being graded and/or put into storage are padded, as well as having fewer and shorter drops. All of these factors are important to a shipper, keeping their potatoes in demand.



Technology has been playing a major part throughout the functioning of storages. In over 80 percent of the warehouses visited, climate controlled practices are applied. Even with the use of this technology these units are still checked three to six times daily. This climate controlled storage cuts down on pressure bruising, making a more attractive and better quality potato. For the climate controlled storage, Processing and Chip potatoes are stored at 45°-55°, while Fresh potatoes are kept at a 38°-42° range.

Generally the potatoes enter the storages in September during harvest and remain in storage until May or June when the last potato leaves the plant. However, due to the ideal storage conditions it's no wonder the potatoes from the Red River Valley always look and taste like they are field fresh.

While the potatoes are stored in these hi-tech facilities, most of the storages have also implemented humidicells to maintain air exchange. The use of humidicells keeps the potatoes in a stable environment. Shippers also put temperature probes into the pile for keeping measurements of the potatoes surroundings, making sure that they are always kept in the best conditions.

Climate controlled environments, as well as humidicells definitely help in keeping potatoes fresh, but all of the wash plants spray their incoming crops to inhibit in-bin sprouting. This process helps insure quality for the consumer.

Keeping all of these things in mind it is no wonder the Red River Valley potatoes are the best in the country. The proof is in the taste.

