



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

Preventing Backovers

A backover incident occurs when a backing vehicle strikes a worker who is standing, walking, or kneeling behind the vehicle. These incidents can be prevented.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 70 workers died from backover incidents in 2016.

These kinds of incidents can occur in different ways. For example:

On June 18, 2009, an employee was working inside a work zone wearing his reflective safety vest. A dump truck operating in the work zone backed up and struck the employee with the rear passenger side wheels. The employee was killed. The dump truck had an audible back up alarm and operating lights. (OSHA Inspection Number 313225377).

Standard operating procedures:

Develop, implement, and enforce standard operating procedures that address worker safety and minimize work to be performed near vehicles and equipment.

To help prevent backover injuries and deaths, NIOSH recommends a number of standard operating procedures:

- Create and enforce an operating procedure that addresses how to work safely and lists best practices to follow when working near vehicles and other equipment.
- Establish safety procedures for working at night with backing equipment. Ensure high-visibility apparel is worn.
- Take precautions. Use equipment that creates minimal blind spots or has proximity-warning devices.
- Before work begins, design the worksites to minimize or eliminate the need for backing vehicles and equipment.
- Have a competent person to supervise worksites involving backing vehicles and equipment.
 - 'Competent person' is defined by OSHA as one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has the authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them.

NIOSH states that before work begins, vehicle and equipment operators need to inspect their machinery for any issues. Ensure everything, including mirrors and windows, is clear and in good working order. If something is found to be defective, remove the vehicle or equipment from service until repairs are made.

When operating equipment, know its blind spots. If you lose contact with your spotter for any reason, immediately stop work.

NIOSH also notes that clear communication is key. “At the start of each shift, review communications signals (verbal, hand signals, flags) between spotters, machine operators, truck drivers, and workers on foot,” the agency states.

Workers on foot:

For workers on foot near backing vehicles or equipment, NIOSH recommends employees adhere to the following:

- Wear appropriate high-visibility personal protective equipment.
- Know the blind spots of vehicles and equipment you work near.
- Never approach a piece of equipment or vehicle without a clear signal of acknowledgment from the operator.
- Avoid areas where vehicles and equipment travel.
- Stay alert for the sound of reversing alarms.
- Avoid complacency. Always know your surroundings.
- Be sure drivers know not to back up equipment unless they are under the direction of a spotter.
- Use barrels, barricades, cones, or reflective devices to guide vehicles and equipment away from workers.
- Post signs informing workers where it is safe to walk.

Equipment operation and servicing:

Ensure that construction vehicles and equipment operating onsite are maintained in safe operating condition at all times by developing and implementing the following:

- A scheduled maintenance program for all roadway construction vehicles and equipment;
- Safety features (reverse alarm, video cameras) installed in accordance with manufacturer’s specifications that operate as intended and function properly;
- Inspection of all vehicles, equipment, and safety devices (brakes, lights, horns, and reverse alarms) at the beginning of each work shift (defective vehicles, equipment, and safety devices should be immediately reported and removed from service until repairs are made); and
- Installation of collision avoidance or proximity warning systems (radar and sonar devices or tag-based systems that use personal electronic tags to detect a marker field generated by a transmitter on the vehicle) or monitoring technologies (video cameras and additional mirrors) on construction vehicles and equipment to increase the likelihood that equipment operators will detect workers on foot around their equipment.

The best safety device is your brain...Use it!!

