

BACKING UP HEAVY EQUIPMENT

In a place as busy as the average construction site, backing up heavy equipment is always a risky business. Vehicles such as dump trucks, front-end loaders, and cement trucks are hard to see behind, even with mirrors. Because of this, the best policy to follow when using heavy equipment is to avoid backing up at all except when it's absolutely necessary. When you must back up, prevent backing-up accidents by taking these precautions:

- Check the surrounding area for obstacles before beginning an operation. Walk around and get familiar with the entire area. Remember that materials and equipment are constantly being moved around, so you can't assume that you "know the territory" if you haven't explored it recently.
- As much as possible, keep other vehicles, materials, equipment, and people out of areas where heavy equipment is operating.
- Make sure your mirrors are properly angled to minimize blind spots. Remember, even with mirrors, you may not see everything behind you.
- Reverse alarms are mandatory on all heavy equipment. Equipment operators must check the reverse alarms for proper operation.
- Use reverse alarms on all equipment with "blind-spots" or an obstructed view to the rear. If you are unable to see behind you, always use a person as a "spotter." Make sure you can see the spotter at all times - stop immediately if the spotter is not in view.
- Be familiar with the limitations of the equipment you are operating. Use only the equipment you are trained to use and only in the way it was intended to be used.

It would be great if all workers were looking after their own safety. But you can't take it for granted that everyone else is on the lookout. When you're behind the wheel of several tons of heavy machinery, you have the responsibility to use that power carefully and safely to prevent accidents. Remember, the key to staying out of danger with heavy equipment is never to assume that the path behind is clear, unless you or your guide can actually see it.

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