

Vehicle and equipment spotters

SUPERVISOR TALK

I'm sure everyone here is aware of the dangers of blind backing. Not only is there the possibility of injuring someone, but also of causing property damage. Today we're going to review the safety measures necessary to avoid such accidents.

Spotters – an important requirement

The first requirement for safe backing is to have a spotter, which is someone who directs the driver. A spotter is necessary when the driver or operator does not have a full view of the backing path. This is critical for any vehicle or piece of equipment, whether it's a batch truck backing up to a paver, a mixer truck backing into a hopper or hoist bucket, or a materials truck making a delivery. The following is an important rule for drivers and operators: "Don't back up unless you have a spotter directing your movement." It's an easy rule to remember. The important thing is to follow it.

The spotter's responsibilities

Let's talk about the spotter. He or she has to watch out for others, as well as for themselves, and make sure the vehicle doesn't damage property. This may appear easy. It seems that all the spotter has to do is direct a vehicle to back up when the path is clear of people and objects. But there are dangers involved.

Spotters have been run over or pinned by the vehicle they were directing. A spotter should never be directly behind a vehicle. When directing the driver, stand at the rear, but well to the driver's side of the vehicle. This gives you an unobstructed view of the entire backing path and the driver can see you clearly. Sometimes when you're a spotter, you may have to move to the other side of the vehicle. If so, stop the vehicle first. If there is not adequate space to pass a safe distance behind the vehicle, walk around the front of it.

It's important that the driver understands your signals, so talk with the driver *before* any backing and explain the signals you will use. This will reduce any misunderstanding. Always be sure to use the same signals for the same moves. Hand signals are preferred over vocal signals. Because of noise, a shouted signal may not be heard or may be misunderstood. Make sure the driver has his or her window down and radio off. The driver should not be talking on a cell phone, eating or performing other distracting activities.

Be sure you're seen

Always be sure that you can be seen. In addition to standing well to the driver's side of the vehicle, wear a fluorescent vest. At night, don't blind the driver by shining your flashlight in the rearview mirror. And, day or night, when you walk backwards, be careful not to trip.

Spotters and drivers work together

"Togetherness" is never as important as when it comes to spotters and drivers of heavy equipment. Working as a team, they not only protect property, but the lives of their fellow workers, as well.

Note: A supervisor talk record form can be found on the last page.

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