Road Work – Backing Up Safely Fact Sheets



WHY IS BACKING UP A RISK?

A driver's field of vision is very limited when backing up a vehicle. Blind spots are the areas around the vehicle that cannot be seen by either looking directly with your eyes or by using your mirrors. Blind spots will vary from vehicle to vehicle, but generally they are to the:

- Rear – directly behind the vehicle.
- Side – the side of the vehicle that the mirrors do not see.
- Front – directly in front of the vehicle that is hidden from the driver by the hood and fenders.

The field of vision may also be blocked or obstructed by part of the vehicle (e.g., a structural post, the hood or back/trunk, or the overall height of the vehicle), the load (e.g., gravel, dirt, boxes, or cargo), poorly placed or damaged mirrors, or poor visibility due to weather (e.g., fog, rain, darkness).

What is the safest way to back up a vehicle?

A driver's field of vision is very limited when backing up a vehicle. The safest way to back up is to not need to back up at all. Try to:

- Design the site plan or work/traffic flow so that drive-through operation is possible.
- Park in a way that allows you to drive forward as you leave.
- Minimize foot traffic by designating walking paths away from traffic routes, or separate the work area with ropes or barricades.

Before backing up, what should the driver do?

Whenever you move your vehicle from a parked position, do a circle check. Check for hazards:

- under the vehicle
- around the vehicle (especially behind)
- above the vehicle

Check for:

- posts
- poles
- buildings
- overhead objects

- electrical/power lines
- the path the vehicle will travel
- other vehicles
- people in the area, and
- the paths the people are walking

Combine the circle check with an inspection of the vehicle’s condition. Report problems or existing damage to the supervisor or employer.

What strategies make backing up safer?

Traffic control plan

- When the employer has control over the job site, create a traffic control plan that coordinates s the flow of moving vehicles and workers to minimize their proximity and contact.
- Create and enforce a procedure that addresses how to work safely, and provide best practices to follow when working near vehicles and other equipment.
- Use barrels, barricades, cones, or reflective devices to guide vehicles away from workers.
- Post signs showing workers where it is safe to walk.

Signallers/Spotters

- Assign workers (signallers) to direct the movement and operation of vehicles and motorized equipment.
- Educate and train the signallers in the skills they need to perform this task.
- Before work begins, drivers and signallers must know the hand signals and their meaning.
- A signaller must:
    - make sure that (s)he has visual contact with the driver when a vehicle is in motion,
    - keep a clear view of the path the vehicle is travelling, and watch the vehicle and load as it moves,
    - be aware of any other persons or vehicles entering the area and be able to warn them of any hazards,
    - not have other duties to do while acting as a signaller,
    - wear high-visibility apparel, and wear appropriate equipment when working at low-light conditions, and
    - not be distracted while performing these duties (e.g., no use of mobile devices or personal earphones).

Education and training

- Drivers/operators and signallers must be educated and trained to:
    - recognize hazards,
    - know the locations of blind spots,
    - know the meaning of the hand signals,
    - know how the vehicle behaves/moves when reversing,
    - stop when they have any doubt about the safety of a person or to an object, and
    - always back up at a slow pace.
- Drivers must stop immediately if they lose visual contact with the signaller.
- All other workers must be aware of the hazards associated with moving vehicles, especially when backing up, and know how to protect themselves by:

    - wearing high-visibility apparel,
    - always making eye contact with the driver when approaching the vehicle,
    - showing or signalling their intentions to the driver or signaller,
    - being alert for any back up alarms or signals,
    - not working within a vehicle’s blind spots, and
    - not standing or walking in areas where vehicles are moving.

Other equipment

- Cameras can provide additional information to the driver. However, the range of vision of the camera also has limitations, and the driver must also check all areas visually, use the mirrors, and be in constant contact with the signaller when present.
- Back up alarms can alert others that the vehicle is moving backwards. The alarm must be audible above the other noises in the area.
- Proximity detection systems use radar and ultrasonic technology to bounce a signal off an object. The system then alerts the driver with a visual or audio warning that an object is in the way. Some proximity systems may include “tags” attached to workers themselves that send an alert to the driver.

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