Skid Steer Safety



Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Skid steers are one of the most used machines in agriculture. Because of its many applications, workers spend a lot of time handling these machines, which increases the risk of injury substantially. Knowing the machine inside and out and having a thorough understanding of the potential dangers is necessary.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Due to the multitude of tasks it can perform, skid steers place operators in many situations with potentially dangerous consequences. These include runovers, rollovers and entrapments. If an operator does not handle the loader properly, objects could enter the cab and crush or impale the driver. Their versatility proves to be a major asset in farm productivity, but it is crucial to be completely aware of every risk before operating this machine.

EXAMPLE

A skid steer operator was attempting to move a 450lb hot metal casting into a cooling bin, situated at the top of an incline. The back end of the machine was slightly lower than the front end. The heat and weight of the load, and the improper balance caused the load to swing and break into the windshield of the skid steer, crushing the operator.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Prepare

- Become familiar with the warning devices, gauges, and controls of your machine.
- Study the manual and become familiar with the safe operating procedures.
- Inspect the work area to be sure there are no obstacles or soft soil. Get to know the terrain and plan your route. If there are streams or embankments, stay far away from the edge as the banks are deep.
- Check for overhead power lines.

Skid Steer Safety Tips

- Improper balance of the machine can affect the stability and turning capabilities. If there is no load, the rear axles carry approximately two-thirds

of the weight. When the bucket is loaded, the weight shifts to the front wheels.
- Do not overload a skid steer, as it reduces stability and capability of the machine.
- Skid steers respond quickly when levers are engaged, so it is important to avoid operating the levers or controls from outside the cab.
- New operators should become comfortable with the multi-tasking required to run the machine. It is advised to remove hands and feet from the controls, as this will stop all functions of the machine.
- Keep side screens and the rollover protective structures in place.
- When operating the machine, always use the seat belt and seat bar.
- Always keep attachments locked.
- Skid steers should never be used as a work platform or personnel carrier.
- Loads should never pass over the top of anyone. Keep the load clear of bystanders.
- Passengers are not permitted.
- When handling loose materials, avoid lifting the arms too high or tilting the bucket back too far. This could result in objects falling into the cab and onto the operator.
- Never dump over objects that could enter the cab in the event of the loader tipping forward.
- When backfilling, practice extreme caution. The weight of the skid steer could cause the trench wall to collapse.
- Avoid undercutting high embankments. This could cause the earth above to give way and bury the loader.
- Lock the loaded arms in place if carrying out repairs with the arms raised.

Practice Safe Skid Steer Travel

- Ensure that your speed is appropriate to the working conditions and terrain of the job.
- Keep the bucket as low as possible while turning or traveling, as the stability of the skid steer decreases when the loader arms are raised.
- Move up and down slopes, keeping the heaviest end of the machine pointing uphill.
- When driving into a manure pack or material pile, raise the front end of the attachment and approach slowly. After loading, tilt-up the bucket or fork when reversing.
- Approach the unloading site slowly, with arms down. Once arriving at the loading site, stop, raise the arms and drive forward slowly until the bucket is just over the pile.
- Keep the attachment level by using the hydraulics and raise the lift arms slowly and evenly. If the skid steer becomes unstable, lower the load quickly.
- Avoid road travel with a skid steer.

FINAL WORD

Due to the many uses of skid steers, they are a frequently used machine for agricultural projects. Spending a lot of your time operating a skid steer makes getting to know and understand its dangers a priority. Learning the controls and studying the manual, knowing your terrain, and using the safe and appropriate methods for each task will prevent injury to you and others.