Drive Forwards – Not Backwards

Can you get through a workday without backing up? Not likely.

Reverse can be more dangerous than forward. Backing up causes many damaging collisions as well as fatal accidents, particularly ones involving pedestrians.

Think ahead and try to avoid many backing-up situations. Before you park, enter a loading yard or drive down an alley, plan how to get out. Is there a better route, exiting forward instead of backward?

Here are reminders on backing up safely:

• Walk around your vehicle, doing a circle check for obstacles in your path. This is a good habit even before moving forward. Look for obstructions such as vehicles, curbs, signs, overhanging roofs and overhead wires. Be aware of pedestrian and vehicle traffic patterns.

• Have a co-worker guide you as you back up. The signaler must stand in a safe place in your view and use proper agreed-upon signals. Don’t rely solely on the signaler; you remain responsible for control of the vehicle.

• Watch in your rear and side view mirrors and over your shoulder. Use the “big picture” theory. Look at a distance around you in all directions, not just at your destination. Watch for unexpected pedestrians or obstacles.

• Don’t lean out an open driver’s door to see. This gives you only a limited area of vision and can cause the door to strike something.

• Back up slowly. Keep your foot above your brake so you can stop instantly.

• Use the backup alarms, lights and other signals required on certain vehicles used for construction, utility maintenance and other purposes. These devices – mechanical, electrical, electronic

and sonic – warn other people. They can be triggered by a gear shift or by the drive shaft. On some alarms, you can adjust volume and adjust the signal to identify the type of vehicle backing up. However, never rely on these alarms to alert other persons. Take all precautions to back up safely. All personnel in the area should receive training regarding backup alarms.

• Be alert for other vehicles backing up. Watch for them in parking lots, terminal yards, loading areas, warehouses, construction sites and in parallel parking slots along the streets. Listen for backup alarms, but never rely on them alone to warn you.

Backing up can put you at risk of an accident causing personal injury and property damage. Avoid this maneuver whenever possible.