Put Safety In Gear When Backing Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

There are several reasons for the frequency of accidents when backing up vehicles. One may be that the driver fails to exercise the usual precautions, thinking a backing accident is unlikely to result in personal injury.

What’s the Danger

HAZARDS/DANGERS OF BACKING

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 most common type of vehicle accident is a backing accident. Due to limited vision out of the back windows or around long truck beds and equipment bodies, drivers may not see other vehicles, obstacles, or even coworkers and pedestrians. Whether in a parking lot, on the road, a construction site, or an agricultural field, workers who learn the proper techniques can help prevent backing accidents.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BACKING UP PROTECTION – The Safest Way to Back Up is Not to Back Up

A driver’s field of vision is very limited when backing up a vehicle. 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 separating the work area with ropes or barricades.

BEFORE BACKING UP, WHAT SHOULD THE DRIVER DO? – CHECK FOR HAZARDS

Before you back up your vehicle, do a vehicle walk around to check underneath and all around it for obstructions and other dangerous situations. Inspect the doors and tailgates for proper closing and safe and secure storage for items and materials. Ensure that there is plenty of clearance around the vehicle for backing.

- posts
- poles
- buildings
- overhead objects
- electrical/power lines
- the path the vehicle will travel
- other vehicles
- people in the area,
- the paths the people are walking

BEST BACKING UP PRACTICES – The Driver is Always Responsible When Backing

Because you cannot see everything behind your vehicle, backing is always dangerous. Avoid backing whenever you can. Park so you will be able to pull forward when you leave. Follow these rules:

- Look at your pathvim
- Back slowly
- Back and turn toward drivers side
- Use a helper

Backing A Vehicle Without A Helper Protocol

- Set the park brake.
- Step out of the vehicle and look at the backing area for hazards.
- Check for clearances and obstacles above, below, to the sides, to the rear and to the front of the vehicle.
- Enter the cab: if there is no guide present, sound horn before moving. Observe both mirrors while backing. If the backing distance is long, stop at intervals and re-check behind, above, below, to the side and ahead. Rather than making one long backing manoeuvre, make a series of short backing manoeuvres.

SAFE STRATEGIES FOR BACKING

Education/Training

- Drivers/operators and signallers must be educated and trained to:
    - recognize hazards.
    - know locations of blind spots.
    - know the meaning of the hand signals.
    - know how the vehicle behaves when reversing.
    - stop when they have any doubt about the safety of a person or to an object.
    - always back up slowly.
- Drivers must stop immediately if they lose visual contact with the signaller.

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.
- 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.
- not be distracted while performing these duties (e.g., no use of mobile devices etc.).

FINAL WORD

Good backing practices and protocols do not come in a vacuum with sound effective vehicle operation. It is a given that the driver is always responsible when backing.