Skid-Steer Loader Safety

WHAT’S AT STAKE?

Wherever heavy work needs to be done in a small space, the skid-steer loader can be found. Carelessness around or in operating these machines can injure or kill you.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

Skid-steers have the same hazards as other machinery. Just because they’re small compared to other mobile equipment doesn’t mean they can’t run you over. Hydraulic arms and attachments add to the danger. For the operator, limited visibility and the normal hazards of operating machines mean danger.

EXAMPLE

A worker hadn’t been informed of the correct route for walking around the construction site. He walked across the path of a reversing skid-steer loader and was knocked down and dragged for a short distance. He lost a leg and a hand in the incident.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

For workers on the ground:

- Maintain eye contact with the skid-steer operator and listen for backup beepers.
- Know where the machine is going.
- Stay clear of attachments.

If you’re an operator:

Watch for hazards such as overhead power lines, underground pipes, rough ground or similar obstacles. Always wear your seatbelt and use the seat bar.

- Before you start up, always perform an inspection.
- Familiarize yourself thoroughly with the machine.
- The attachment arms could crush you against the body of the machine. Never operate any controls from outside the machine. Always keep side protection screens in place.
- Never allow riders.
- Don’t work near edges; the loader could tip forward. Don’t undercut banks either; a loader could be buried if the bank collapses.
- The machine handles and steers differently while the bucket is loaded. Make sure to allow for this while working, and never overload the bucket.
- Never travel across grades, only up or down. Keep the heavy end upslope.
- Keep the bucket level while raising it. Loose material can fall out onto the ground or a co-worker, or into the cab.
- Ensure attachment pins and lock plates are in place. Insecure attachments may detach and strike bystanders or the operator’s compartment. If you must do maintenance with the attachments raised, ensure that they are properly locked and blocked into place and won’t fall.
- Always keep the load low while moving.

FINAL WORD

Following these rules and being aware of your workplace’s policies on skid-steer loaders can help make certain you and your co-workers will head home safely after your shift ends. Failing to heed them could mean a long spell in the hospital, or worse.