

Moving at the Speed of Safety

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Moving vehicles and equipment cause many injuries and fatalities in construction. Moving equipment of any kind can be dangerous, including portable staging, scaffolding, work platforms, hoists, cranes and dozers. But sometimes machinery is essential to a job. Machine operators do their best to keep from running into or over workers, but with all the activity and noise at a construction site, an operator may not see a worker in the line of danger. It is every worker's responsibility to be alert and safety-minded to avoid costly mishaps on the job.

All vehicle or equipment operators should be trained and competent. Operators should arrive at a construction site prepared for a safe day by getting enough rest and taking occasional breaks during the day to reduce fatigue. Machine operation should be limited or avoided if operators feel ill or take medication that may affect their level of alertness. Operators should wear approved personal protective equipment appropriate for the weather and work conditions. Before driving, seat belts should be securely fastened, even if the vehicle has roll over protection (ROPs). If there are no passenger seats, there should be no riders. Operators should check to see that everyone is at a safe distance from the vehicle or equipment before moving. Only workers with a driver's license should take equipment on public roads.

Vehicle ground speed should match operating conditions. Speed should be cut in turns, near ditches or obstacles, on rough, hilly or muddy ground, and when visibility is poor. All workers should be warned not to approach or get on equipment that is under power. Backing a vehicle can be especially dangerous. Operators should ask another worker to direct the backing from a safe and visible distance. When equipment is stopped, brakes should be set securely, using park lock and keys removed to keep unauthorized persons from restarting the machinery. Operators should disengage the power take off, keeping shields and guards in place, and turn off the engine before unclogging, refueling or working on a power-driven machine.

Workers should watch out for themselves, because visibility may be restricted for vehicle operators. The best way to avoid danger from moving equipment is to stay alert and out of the way, never walk under or alongside moving equipment because injuries can occur if the vehicle turns, slides or if the load shifts. Workers should not depend on hearing a horn or back up alarm, because a construction site is not only busy, it is also noisy. Workers should not take chances by darting behind a moving vehicle, risking a slip and falling under machinery. No one should ride on any part of a moving vehicle, like the running boards, drawbars, loader buckets or on top of a load, except areas intended for transport. Riders may fall off if a vehicle if it's load shifts, or be crushed if it passes under low clearances. When riding on transport vehicles, arms and legs should be kept inside.

Periodic training in vehicular safety will help your workers to keep moving in the right direction.

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