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ACCIDENT TYPES-BACKING

Millions of miles are driven each year and most of these miles are driven going forward. Although the majority of accidents occur while vehicles are going forward, approximately 30 percent of all accidents occur when vehicles are moving in reverse. Based on the high frequency of these accidents and the facts that all backing accidents are often preventable, emphasis must be placed on safe backing procedures.

Accidents that occur when a vehicle is going in reverse are costly to companies. While the most frequent of claims involve property damage, bodily injury to individuals occurs as well. The element of risk resulting in bodily injury is ever present when backing any vehicle. This is a major factor when considering why the total cost of backing accidents is so high.

There are many hazards that have to be considered when backing a vehicle:

- Inadequate clearance on both sides and top of the vehicle
- Objects directly to the rear of the vehicle when it begins to back
- Objects that move into the pathway of the backing vehicle
- Blind spots created by the vehicle
- Inattentive ground guides responsible for giving directions to the driver

What steps can be taken to prevent backing accidents? The most important one is to make all drivers aware of the potential for backing accidents and continually stress the following procedures:

- Don't back up unless absolutely necessary. Proper planning of routes and proper positioning of the vehicle can reduce the amount of backing.
- When possible, use helpers or guides to assist you in backing. Prior to any movement, the driver and guide should review the signals that will be used to back the vehicle. Always know exactly where the vehicle will be placed. Throughout the movement, the driver maintains full responsibility for the actions of the vehicle.
- Use all available aids to keep you aware of your surroundings. These include mirrors on both sides of the vehicle, rearview mirrors, reflections of the vehicle in windows, and shadows thrown by the vehicle.
- When no helper is available, get out and walk around the entire vehicle. This "circle of safety" should be used to observe anything that could come in contact with the vehicle. Be sure to observe areas above ground level such as clearance from the top and sides of the vehicle.
- Back into driveways instead of backing out into traffic. This practice will give the driver a better view of children or other hazards that might be in the area. It also puts the driver in the position to operate with full visibility when entering traffic again.
- Make sure the proper mirrors are installed and they are properly adjusted before moving the vehicle.

- Check to see that backup lights function properly. In addition to providing illumination in darkness, they act as a warning to others that the vehicle is moving in reverse.
- Backup alarms are required on construction equipment, but they can also be installed on any other type of vehicle. These alarms provide an audible warning when vehicles back up and should be considered if a lot of backing is done or large vehicles are involved.
- Always back up slowly. When backing the vehicle, drivers should always expect something to get in their pathway. Slow backing will enable quicker stops.
- Roll down a window and turn off the radio so warnings can be heard.

Driving backwards can be done safely, but caution must be the watchword.

Get Help-Walk Around-Look In All Directions-Go Slow

Publications

National Safety Council, **Motor Fleet Safety Manual (4th ED)**

A publication that is probably the most widely recognized text on general fleet safety

JJ Keller, **Fleet Safety Compliance Manual**, A comprehensive guide to fleet safety.

Web Sites

<http://www.merginet.com/operations/field/PreventBackingAccidents.cfm>

This is a good article on preventing backing accidents in emergency vehicles.

National Safety Council

<http://www.nsc.org/staticprod/books.cfm>

This is the publications site for the NSC and shows many resources for fleet safety.

National Highway Transportation Safety Administration

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>

This should be your first stop when looking for assistance in fleet safety. It provides statistics, brochures, posters, and topical and seasonal promotions.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/>

The FMCSA is focused on reducing crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. This site includes reports on companies' safety records, safety materials and statistics.

Federal Department of Labor (OSHA)

http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/trucking_industry/index.html

Federal DOL site with a good selection of links to other government sites related to fleet safety.

JJ Keller

http://www.jjkeller.com/browse/product.html?group_id=1799&action_code=90983

JJ Keller is widely considered one of the primary sources in DOT compliance and fleet safety.

http://www.business.com/directory/transportation_and_logistics/trucking/fleet_management/fleet_safety/

A list of commercial vendors for materials and services related to fleet safety.

Videos

<http://www.nrsc.com/>

Requires a subscription for access to many safety videos including:

Backing up #B150

Backing Safety #B129

These videos maybe requested through your agent or directly from

<mailto:Phillip.Trusty@ge.com>

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