



MONTHLY SAFETY MEETING

Date: May 2018

Subject: How to avoid vehicle backing accidents

We can't argue with statistical information but we can learn from it. According to the National Safety Council, one of every four accidents occurs while backing the vehicle. "Backing" and "back-over" accidents cause an estimated 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries each year. Backing accidents cost business owners and insurance companies millions of dollars in vehicle property damage and lawsuits. Every service vehicle that must go to a shop for repair is a service vehicle that cannot produce income for the owner.

- **Backing accidents are 100 percent preventable** because they are always caused by human error. Employers and employees can better protect their companies from liability, as well as the safety of others by educating themselves with these safe backing up pointers:
- **Know your blind spots.** Every vehicle has a blind spot. The larger the vehicle, the larger the blind spot. As an operator of a large vehicle you will need to identify the blind spots on your vehicle. Once you've identified these blind spots avoid taking any unnecessary risks. Every vehicle has its own characteristics when it comes to its overall dimensions, weight, and blind spots. Get to know the vehicle you're operating to avoid accidents.
- **Avoid backups when possible.** Try to park in areas that only allow for minimal backing if possible. Position your vehicle so that it can be seen by others around you. It would be advisable to turn on your emergency warning lights. This will allow others around you to be cautious.
- **Don't park in alleys that do not let you drive through.** Backing out of an alley into a busy street is dangerous for everyone. If you must park in the alley, back in, if local regulations allow it.
- **Walk around the entire vehicle,** observing the proximity of structures, other cars, pedestrians, or overhanging wires and height restrictions. Map it out in your head before you get behind the wheel of the vehicle.
- **Use a spotter for congested or difficult situations.** Use hand signals that both you, the driver, and spotter understand. Hand signals force you to be visually engaged and don't allow you to detach yourself from the task. Use a spotter for situations where children are present, such as schools, play areas, and residential jobsites. Children are totally unpredictable and easily hidden in your blind spots.
- **Get proper rest.** Many accidents occur when employees are tired. Fatigue and lack of rest is a major contributor to fleet accidents. Your business and the driving public needs employees who get eight hours of sleep to be alert when driving. Tired drivers make more mistakes when backing in reverse than those who have had proper rest.
- **Use technology with caution.** There have been some great advances in technology the last 20 years to help prevent backing accidents. Back-up alarms warn surrounding people in the area a vehicle is in reverse. Back up sonar warns a driver when an object is in their back-up path. Closed-circuit mini TV cameras give a clear view of the back-up path. However, all these can fail if the driver or surrounding pedestrians ignore or fail to use these devices properly