

BACKING SAFELY

According to the National Safety Council, twenty-five percent of vehicle accidents result from poor backing techniques. Backing accidents are the cause of 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries per year. A study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found over 90% of backing accidents are attributed to either the driver being unaware of obstacles or using improper backing techniques. The use of safe vehicle backing tips by employers and employees can help prevent accidents while on the job.

- **Check the blind spots.** No matter how much the mirrors are adjusted, all vehicles have blind spots.
- **Park defensively.** Park vehicles in the center of the parking space, choose easy-exit parking spaces, and don't crowd neighboring vehicles. If possible, backing into parking spots upon arrival is always better than backing out when departing.
- **Conduct a Circle of Safety check.** Walk around the vehicle prior to backing. This establishes an awareness of the surroundings, potential obstructions, and vehicle clearances.
- **Use a spotter.** A driver should use another person to help them when backing. The driver and spotter should use hand signals instead of verbal ones and make sure they understand each other's signals. Don't have the spotter walking backwards while giving instructions.
- **No spotter available?** After finishing the walkaround, return to the vehicle and begin backing immediately. This will allow little time for people and/or obstacles to change behind the vehicle. Backing without a spotter should only take place after a driver has as much information about the area as possible. A back up alarm can help warn away pedestrians and drivers of other vehicles who may try to enter the area the vehicle is backing into.

- **Be aware of your surroundings.** Be attentive and listen. Roll down the window, turn off the radio, and listen for the honk of a horn, the sound of another vehicle, or the presence of pedestrians near the vehicle.

Long-Term Solutions to Safe Backing

- Installation of rear-vision camera systems in vehicles eliminates rear blind spots and can put drivers in full visual control of the rear of a vehicle.
- No amount of forward-driving experience can help a driver with backing a truck or other vehicles. All drivers need to practice in safe surroundings until they become familiar with the way the vehicle backs up compared to the direction the steering wheel is turned.
- Creation and support of a company-wide training program. The program should include a driver's course to teach and review backing techniques, as well as covering equipment usage, hand signals, dangers to avoid, and other risk-lowering topics.



Remember:

1. Back only when necessary.
2. Back the shortest distance possible.
3. Back in a straight line when possible.
4. Back sight side next.
5. Back blind side only as a last resort.
6. Back as slowly as possible. When in doubt, set brakes, get out, and look!
7. Use 4-ways (hazards) before backing.
8. Monitor both mirrors every 3 to 5 seconds.
9. Check all six clearances (front, rear, right side, left side, ground, and overhead), and know your vehicle.
10. When possible, have a spotter!