

Safe Vehicle Backing FactSheet

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According to the National Safety Council, one out of four vehicle accidents can be blamed on poor backing techniques. Backing accidents cause 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries per year. The use of safe vehicle backing tips by employers and employees can help prevent accidents while on the job.

- **Get to know a vehicle's blind spots.** In a medium-sized truck, blind spots can extend up to 16 feet in front and 160 feet behind a vehicle. Drivers need to remember that mirrors can never give the whole picture while backing.
- **Think in advance.** Drivers should not put themselves into unnecessary backing situations.
- **Park defensively.** Drivers must choose easy-exit parking spaces that don't crowd neighboring vehicles and park their vehicle in the center of the parking space.
- **When parking in an alley.** If an alley doesn't permit driving all the way through or room to turn around, a driver should back into it (if local ordinances permit) so that when leaving the vehicle can pull forward into the street.
- **Do a walk-around.** Walking around a vehicle gives a driver firsthand view of the backing area and any limitations. They can check for children, soft or muddy areas, potholes, tire hazards, and other dangers.
- **Know the clearances.** When performing a walk-around, drivers can check for obstructions, low-hanging trees and wires, and any other potential clearance-related problems.
- **Every backing situation is new and different.** Sometimes a driver visits the same location several times a day and should be watchful each visit for changes and any new obstacles.
- **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.

- **When driver's spot for themselves,** they need to return to the vehicle and start backing within a few seconds after finishing the walk-around. This will allow very 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.

Long-Term Solutions to Safe Backing

- Installation of rear-vision camera systems in vehicles eliminates rear blind spots. Investing in a rear-vision camera system for vehicles 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, practice, 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.

This publication was produced with information from the National Safety Council and Texas Department of Insurance.

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