

Spotter Safety

Spotting for heavy equipment operators can be a dangerous task. Every year, "back over" incidents between equipment and spotters result in fatalities.

OSHA statistics of "back over" incidents in the past 10 years point to;

1. Dump trucks
2. Semi-trucks
3. Ordinary pickup trucks

Spotting has proven to be an effective safeguard for preventing incidents between pedestrians and heavy equipment. Spotting also prevents expensive property loss incidents. Just as important, safe work practices need to be established to protect spotters.

Basic Safe Work Practices for Spotting:

- Never walk behind the equipment and spot at the same time. When spotting stand where the operator can see you at all times and flag the equipment back to you.
- Agree on hand signals prior to any spotting activities with equipment operators.
- As the operator, stop anytime you lose sight of the spotter.
- Review the work area for any additional hazards such as trip hazards or fixed objects that the equipment can strike. Remove any people, objects, or equipment prior to backing into an area to eliminate the possibility of a strike.

Eliminate or Minimize Backing

When planning work, look at the task and determine if there is a way to eliminate backing or minimize it. If there are trucks in the work area that need to dump material, look to be able to pull through where they need to dump. If pulling through is not possible, pick a route that minimizes the need to back up.

Pre-Task Planning

Often times, personnel who are spotting for equipment may have never operated that specific piece or model of equipment. Work with operators to discuss and review the blind spots of the equipment onsite. Some of the large off-road dump trucks have more than a 60-foot blind spot in the rear. If the spotter or other personnel in the work area are not aware of the blind spots of the equipment, they may unknowingly walk into the line of fire.

Discussion points

- Is there a task where we can eliminate the need for a spotter?
- What are some other safe work practices we can use when spotting or operating around a spotter?