

Prevention Connection



Safety resources to protect your world

Think in reverse: How to avoid vehicle backing accidents

According to the National Safety Council, one of every four accidents occurs while the vehicle is operating in reverse. "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 vehicle that must go to a shop for repair is a 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 the assets and profits of the company, as well as the safety of others by educating themselves with these safe vehicle backing up pointers:

- **Know your blind spots.** Every vehicle has a blind spot. The larger the vehicle, the larger the blind spot. A small car may have only 12 feet of blindness from the rear-view mirror, while a full-sized pickup can have as much as 30 feet. Here's a way to identify the amount of blind space an auto has: Ask an employee to stand directly behind a parked, not-running vehicle with a safety cone. Have him or her walk back from the vehicle and set down the cone when it becomes visible to you. Measure the distance to get an appreciation of the size of the blind spot. Have employees operating the vehicles do the same procedure.
- **Avoid back-ups when possible.** Don't put yourself in the situation where you always have to back up. In a parking lot, pull through to the space ahead of you; don't leave room for someone to park in front of your vehicle and force you to back up. If possible, park in the street and not in a driveway.
- **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. 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.
- **Never expect a novice to handle a trailer.** Hauling and backing up of utility trailers is a learned skill. Do not expect an employee to use a utility trailer without hours of training and mentoring by other more experienced drivers. A vehicle reacts entirely differently with a trailer attached. Backing up can be a challenge to the most skilled drivers.
- **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 that 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.

This bulletin is designed by SECURA Insurance to inform you of important safety measures that can prevent injuries and save you considerable business expense.