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SPOTTERS

I'm sure everyone here is aware of the dangers of blind backing. Not only is there the possibility of injuring someone, but of causing property damage. Today we're going to review safety measures necessary to avoid such accidents.

SPOTTERS -AN IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT

The first requirement for safe backing is to have a spotter, someone to direct the driver. A spotter is necessary when the driver or operator does not have a full view of the backing path. This holds true for any vehicle or piece of equipment, whether it's a batch truck backing up to a paver, a mixer truck backing into a hopper or hoist bucket, or a materials truck making a delivery. This is the important rule for drivers and operators: "Don't back up unless you have a spotter directing your movement." It's an easy rule to remember. The important thing is to obey it.

THE SPOTTER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Let's talk about the spotter. This person has to watch out for others as well as for himself, and make sure the vehicle doesn't damage property. This may appear easy. It seems that all the spotter has to do is to direct a vehicle to back up when the path is clear of persons and objects. But there are dangers involved.

Sometimes when you're a spotter, you may have to pass behind a vehicle. If so, stop the vehicle first. As you're passing behind it, extend your hand at arm's length and place it against the back of the vehicle. Then if the vehicle starts to move because the driver's foot slips off the brake or clutch pedal, you'll be able to feel the movement and get out of the way.

When directing the driver, stand at the rear but well to the driver's side of the vehicle. This gives you an unobstructed view of the entire backing path. And the driver can see you clearly. It's important that the driver understands your signals. So get together with the driver before any backing and explain the signals you will use. In this way you can be reasonably sure there will be no misunderstanding. Always be sure to use the same signals for the same moves. Hand signals are much better than vocal signals. Because of noise, a shouted signal may not be heard or may be misunderstood.

BE SURE YOU'RE SEEN

Always be sure that you can be seen. In addition to standing well to the driver's side of the vehicle, wear a fluorescent vest. At night, don't blind the driver by shining your flashlight in the rearview mirror. And, day or night, when you walk backwards, be careful not to trip.

SPOTTERS AND DRIVERS WORK TOGETHER

Togetherness was never so important as when it comes to spotters and drivers of heavy equipment. Working as a team, they not only protect property but the lives of their fellow workers as well.