

TOOLBOX TALK: WORKING AROUND HEAVY EQUIPMENT

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Everybody look at the excavator. Now stand where you would be if you were doing your normal job. How many of you are inside the tail swing?

The talk

Every machine on this site has a blind spot, and on most of them it is directly behind and directly to the right. That is not carelessness. It is where the cab, the engine and the mirrors put it.

The operator is also concentrating on a bucket, which means his head is turned away from everywhere else. Assuming he has seen you is the single most common mistake made around equipment.

So you never walk into a machine's working area without making eye contact first, and you wait for the operator to acknowledge you. Not a wave in his direction. He looks at you and he tells you to come.

Tail swing is the other one. An excavator's counterweight comes round further than people expect and it comes round at head height. There is no warning noise and there is nothing you can do once it is moving.

When a machine is parked, the brake goes on. On a slope the wheels get chocked as well. A machine that rolls while nobody is in it is not an accident, it is a step somebody skipped.

Nobody works under a bucket, a blade or a raised body that is held up by hydraulics. Hydraulics leak. If it has to stay up while somebody is underneath, it gets blocked or cribbed so that it is sitting on steel, not on pressure.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The blind spot on the machine nearest you, from where the operator actually sits.
- The tail swing arc, and what is inside it right now.
- The parking brake, and the chocks, and where the chocks are stored.
- Where you would stand to be seen by that operator before walking in.
- The travel route the machines are using today, and where it crosses where people walk.
- Any machine parked on a slope, and whether it is chocked.

The rules that apply

- Whenever equipment is parked the parking brake is set. Equipment parked on an incline has the wheels chocked and the parking brake set.
- Blades, buckets and dump bodies are fully lowered or blocked when the machine is being repaired or is not in use, with controls in neutral, motor stopped and brakes set.
- Machinery or parts held up by slings, hoists or jacks must be substantially blocked or cribbed before anyone is allowed to work under or between them.
- Bidirectional machines such as rollers, compactors, loaders and dozers must have a working horn that can be told apart from the surrounding noise, used as needed when moving in either direction.
- Earthmoving or compacting equipment with an obstructed view to the rear is not used in reverse unless the reverse alarm is working or an employee signals that it is safe.
- Equipment left unattended at night next to a highway in use, or next to work in progress, must carry lights or reflectors, or be barricaded with them.

Ask the crew

- Stand where the operator can see you before you approach. Show me.
- What is behind that machine right now, and does the operator know?
- Who is the spotter on this pour, and how does he stop the truck?

Close with this

If you have not made eye contact, you are not there as far as that machine is concerned.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.