



Backhoe woes

Make sure your machine is blocked or chocked before leaving it on a slope

The accident:

A backhoe operator was working on covering a pipe in a drainage ditch next to a retaining wall. He parked the machine on a slope and exited the backhoe while leaving the bucket, which was full of rocks and gravel, elevated. While using a shovel to scoop and place the material, the operator bent over directly in front of the bucket. The backhoe rolled forward and pinned the operator against the retaining wall. A coworker who witnessed the incident moved the backhoe and called paramedics to the scene. The operator was transported to a local hospital where he died from multiple traumatic injuries.

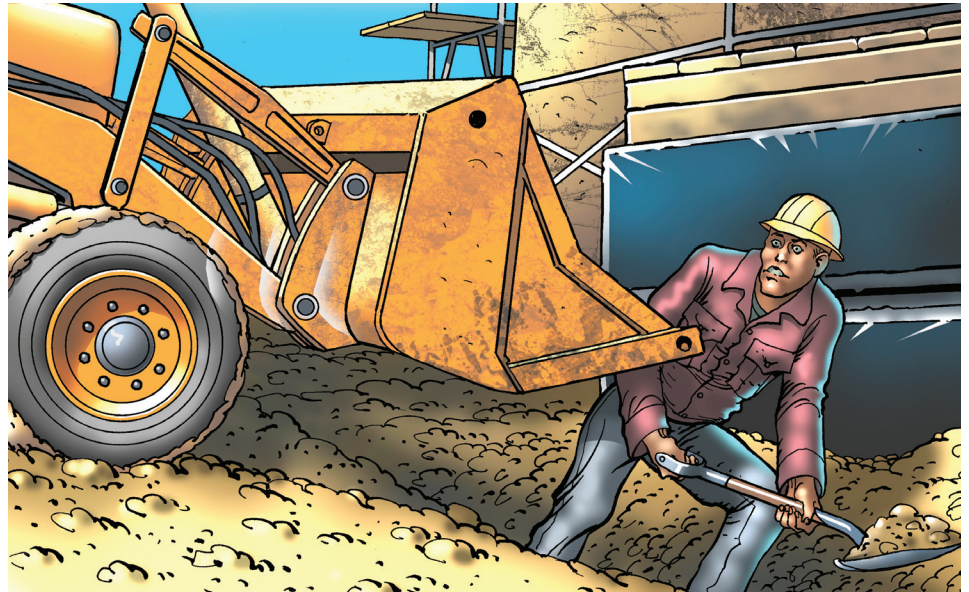


Illustration by Don Lomax

The bottom line: The coworker who put the backhoe in reverse to release the victim said the shifter was in first gear and the parking brake was engaged, and a check of the machine showed the brake to be operational. A post-accident investigation determined the victim had not had adequate training on the proper parking procedure or the machine's safety features, and the operator's manual stated the parking brake would not hold the backhoe in place when parked unattended on an incline. The contractor's training manual was general and did not include machine-specific information.

Safe steps:

Be familiar with the proper procedures for parking and exiting a machine. If you have not received operation and safety training on a machine, don't operate the unit until you complete the required training. When parking a backhoe, try whenever possible to choose level ground. If parking on an incline is a necessity, there are several steps you should take to prevent downward motion:

- **Always lower the bucket.** The weight of the bucket creates drag, effectively creating a barricade that could help prevent the machine from moving, even on a slope.
- **Shut off the machine.** Shift all controls to neutral, idle and then shut off the engine and remove the ignition key.
- **Block and/or chock the wheels.** Even with the bucket lowered and the parking brake applied, equipment can still move. Chocking the wheels serves as an additional measure to keep the machine in a stationary position.

Information for this Safety Watch is from an accident report, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers and the Center for Disease

Control's NIOSH Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation Program. It is meant for general information only.