



Gravity shifts

Take extra care when using a skid steer on a slope

The accident: While moving a load of gravel down a hill, a skid steer became unbalanced, prompting the operator to put his leg out to brace himself when the machine surged forward and then died. The operator's leg became trapped between the machine and the loaded bucket, compressing his leg above the ankle. The operator started the machine again to release his leg, and then was airlifted to the nearest hospital with a compound break. He admitted later the bucket was "slightly overloaded."

The bottom line: Plan your work. Make sure you know where you will make your pickups, lifts and turns. Before you raise a loader bucket, know where you will dump it, and always carry the load low. Operate at speeds slow enough so you have complete control at all times.

Travel slowly over rough or slippery terrain and on hillsides. Raise loads slowly at an even rate and be ready to lower the load quickly if the loader gets in an unstable situation.

Do not drive across an excessively steep slope under any circumstances – instead, travel straight up and down a slope with the heavy end of the loader pointed uphill. If the bucket is loaded, for example, point the machine uphill. If the bucket is empty, point the machine downhill.

The center of gravity of a skid steer shifts as loads are lifted and lowered. Never attempt to make sharp turns or travel on steep slopes with a raised load. Check the slope's surface condition for adequate trac-



Illustration by Don Lomax

tion, since loss of traction can cause the loader to slide and trip.

Never leave the operator's seat without lowering the bucket or other attachment flat on the ground or engaging the approved lift arm support and then stopping the engine and removing the ignition key. Avoid sudden stops, starts or turns.

Do not overload the bucket or attachment, or carry a load that can fall from the bucket or attachment. Different attachments can change the weight distribution of the loader. They can also affect its stability and handling response. Be sure you can keep the loader under complete control.

When changing buckets or installing attachments, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure all connections are securely fastened. Tighten all bolts, nuts and screws to recommended torques. **EW**

Information for this Safety Watch was gathered from newspaper reports of a real accident and the Association of Equipment

Manufacturers. It is meant for general information only; to order AEM's "Skid Steer Safety Manual," go to www.aem.org.