

Keep your balance

Moving materials with a backhoe calls for extreme care



Illustration by Don Lomax

The accident: A crew replacing cracked drainpipes used a backhoe to carry replacement concrete pipes to a utility trench. The backhoe operator lifted several pipes from the bed of a truck onto the loader bucket and began moving across the rubble-covered worksite towards the trench. Keeping the pipes balanced on the raised bucket obscured his view of the jobsite. Suddenly, the backhoe's front right wheel dipped into a deep, muddy rut causing the heavy pipes to shift. As the operator tried to right the load, he oversteered, causing the backhoe to overturn. He was taken

to the hospital with a broken arm and head injuries.

The bottom line: Do a walk around the worksite for partially hidden obstacles, drop-offs and soft ground conditions. Driving over a hole or debris can cause the machine to overturn or even bump you off the machine to possibly be run over.

Travel slowly and always carry the bucket low so you have good visibility and stability. Raise the loader only when it is necessary to dump. Backhoes can overturn if you raise the bucket too high, especially in turns and on uneven ground.

Remember, the higher the bucket is, the more unstable the machine.

Be sure the load you are lifting is balanced and move the boom slowly to avoid swaying. When loading or unloading material to a trailer, never swing the bucket over the truck cab or when the driver is inside.

When lifting round objects such as pipes or logs in the bucket keep the bucket low. If you raise the bucket too high or tip it too far back, round objects can roll backward down the loader arms and onto you.

BACKHOE BASICS

Before your shift, confirm all the personal safety devices on the backhoe are in good working order. These include seat belts, the rollover protective structure, guards, shields, lights, mirrors and backup warning systems.

If you are working on a slope, prevent tipping by dumping the bucket uphill. If you must dump downhill, swing slowly to avoid tipping.

Be extremely careful when you are backfilling because the weight of the material added to the weight of the machine could cause the edge of the new excavation area to collapse. **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 "Backhoe Loader Safety Manual," go to www.aem.org.

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