



Off, not idling

If you leave a backhoe for any reason, make sure the machine is completely turned off

The accident: A two-man crew was using a backhoe loader and hand shovel to clear earth from a home's foundation footing. The backhoe operator dug a 2-foot-wide by 2-foot-deep excavation around the footing while the second worker removed extra dirt with the shovel after the backhoe passed through. The operator lowered the backhoe's bucket to a pile of dirt about 8 feet from the other worker and dismounted the machine to inspect the trench. When he returned to the backhoe, he accidentally contacted the boom swing control, which swung the boom toward the worker standing in the trench, pinning him against the house and killing him.

The bottom line: Both workers made common mistakes that led to this accident. The operator should have lowered the boom to a safe position with the bucket on the ground and turned off the machine before stepping off for any reason. The man in the trench should have been aware of the backhoe's swing zone and stayed out of it. Marking swing areas with rope, tape or other barriers is a good idea.

When you get on or leave a backhoe, always face the machine, maintain a three point contact with steps and hand holds, and never jump on or off of it. Do not use the steering wheel or any control lever as a hand hold when you enter or leave the machine.

Before starting or restarting a machine, make sure no one is under it, on it or close to it. Let other workers and bystanders know you are starting up

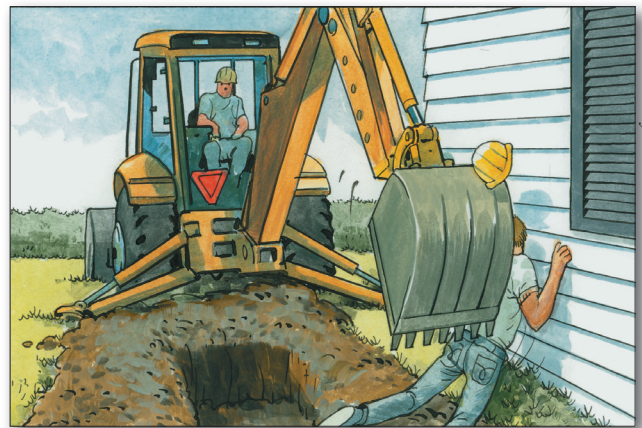


Illustration by Don Lomax

and don't start until everyone is clear of the machine. Stay in the operator's seat at all times when operating and keep your seat belt fastened when you drive or operate it. Be in control of your machine at all times.

Always be aware of your surroundings and ground conditions. Avoid steep slopes or unstable surfaces. If you must drive on a slope, keep the load low and proceed with extreme caution. Don't drive across a steep slope under any circumstances; rather, drive straight up and down the slope. Also avoid turning on an incline; if it's necessary to do so, use extreme caution and make the turn wide and slow with the bucket carried low.

Always look around before you back up, hook up or swing an attachment. Be sure that everyone is in the clear. **EW**

Information for this Safety Watch came from an actual accident report and from 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.