

# Be wary of work zones

Know how to stay safe when there's a lot going on

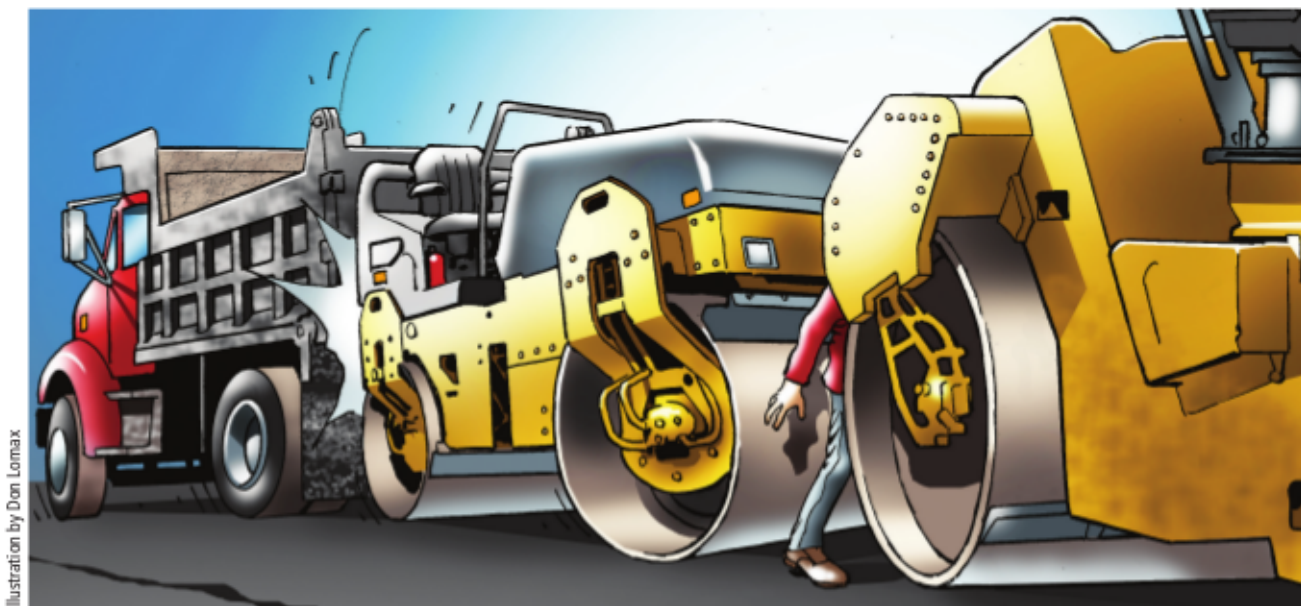


Illustration by Don Lomax

**The accident:** A heavy equipment operator was part of a crew working on a resurfacing project for a county road. In need of a restroom, but with none available in the work zone, the operator chose an area out of the line of sight of others between two compactors. While the worker was between the two pieces of equipment, a dump truck backed into one of the compactors, pushing the machine into the other compactor and crushing the operator. He was transported to the nearest hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

**The bottom line:** A post-accident investigation determined the parking brake on the compactor struck by the dump truck was not functioning, enabling the truck to push the machine into the other compactor. Furthermore, the dump

truck driver was backing into position using only his driver's side rear mirror and without the aid of a spotter. The dump truck's rear backup alarm was not functioning.

A number of mistakes contributed to the accident, which was completely preventable. Here are some simple steps to avoid finding yourself in the same situation:

**Follow the plan** – With so many vehicles and machines on the site, workers on foot and on equipment should follow the jobsite's internal traffic control plan, which will keep machines and pedestrians out of the same lanes of travel.

**Use a spotter** – When backing trucks and other equipment in a work zone, always use a spotter. A predetermined means of communication, such as radios or hand signals, needs to be used to maneuver the vehicle into position.

**Check your equipment** – One of the compactors and the truck had mechanical issues. A pre-shift equipment inspection would have found both the malfunctioning compactor brake and the truck's inoperable backup alarm. Before you begin work, make sure a trained operator has conducted a pre-start safety inspection. Any equipment with non-functioning safety features should be placed out of service.

Always remember you're vulnerable when you're on foot on a jobsite. Never place yourself between two pieces of equipment, or between a piece of equipment and a structure. Any non-work activities that will take your attention away from your surroundings – cell phone calls, bathroom breaks, etc. – should be conducted outside the work zone area.

Information for this Safety Watch is from an accident report and NIOSH's Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation program. It is meant for general information only.

Date of safety talk: \_\_\_\_\_ Leader: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Attending: \_\_\_\_\_