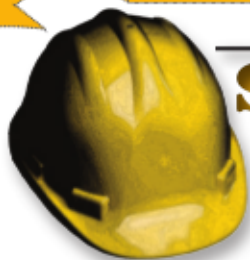


Tear this out and
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SAFETY WATCH

by Marcia Gruver

Strap yourself in

Once in the cab, truck safety – whether on an on-road or off-road truck – begins with a seat belt.

The accident: Operating a truck, an operator lost control as he backed toward a steep embankment to dump a load of dirt. The truck began sliding backwards and did at least one complete rotation before coming to a stop. The operator, who was not wearing a seat belt, sustained head and torso injuries and was taken away from the site in critical condition.

The bottom line: Seat belt use is such a no-brainer, and yet some still resist using them, even when consequences like the one above can be found in accident report after accident report. One construction company has this rule: If you're in the seat, you're wearing a seat belt. If not, you're fined.

But truck safety starts before you strap yourself in. First make sure you do a walk-around at the beginning of your shift, checking to make sure everything is in working order. Not only will you be able to take note of such things as busted tail lights, you'll see if there are any other workers around the truck.



Illustration by Don Lomax

This simple procedure would have avoided one tragedy reported in 2006, when an excavating company employee failed to notice that the company's owner was adjusting the brakes on the center axle of a dump truck. Thinking he was in the clear, the employee got in the cab and backed the truck up, killing his employer.

Another aspect that also came into play in the first truck accident mentioned was failing to determine the appropriate grade and soil conditions to dump the truck. Operators have to be aware of cliffs, excavations and overhangs, and in preparing to dump, need to

position their machines as straight and level as possible. Stop your machine using the service brake and shift to neutral. Apply the parking/holding brake. Your machine should be stationary before the dump body is raised. Never keep the dump body raised longer than required. Never make steering movements if the dump body

is raised with a struck load, since this could cause the machine to tip over. Before pulling away from the unloading area, make sure the dump body is fully lowered.

Drive at a safe speed, and be aware of the distance required to stop your machine when loaded. Anticipate the proper gear range needed to provide full control of your machine. Before a downhill slope begins, select a suitable gear for traveling. Reduce speed until the selected gear engages. A good practice is to select the same gear range for traveling down a grade that is selected for going up a grade. **EW**

Information for this Safety Watch was gathered from news reports and the Association of Equipment Manufacturers. It is meant for general information only;

to order AEM's "Dumper (Off-Highway Dump Truck) Safety Manual" go to www.aem.org.