

Trailer troubles

Use your best practices when driving machines on and off a trailer

The accident: The owner of a small construction company that performed excavation work was preparing to back-fill a pond. He had transported a dozer on a flatbed trailer, which he parked on a road with a 7-percent grade. While backing the dozer to the rear of the trailer, the machine slipped off the trailer's down grade edge, flipped and landed on its side, striking the contractor as he attempted to exit the cab, and killing him.



Illustration by Don Lomax

The bottom line: A post-accident investigation determined that the dozer's seat belt had been removed from the machine prior to the incident. The dozer had started to slip while the tracks were in contact with the metal surfaced portion of the trailer. According to a witness, the contractor tried to jump clear of the falling dozer but hit his head on the ROPS and fell back into the cab. The cause of death was blunt force head injuries.

Level it out

In this incident, the contractor parked the trailer on a slope and then was unable to keep the ma-

chine from slipping in the direction of the slope once the tracks came in contact with a metal surface. Before unloading equipment, park the trailer on level ground. If no level surface is available, park parallel to the slope and then securely block the vehicle against motion prior to unloading equipment.

Check your equipment

Seat belts are provided as standard equipment; however, the belt had been removed. If you've removed a seat belt from a machine for maintenance or repair purposes, reinstall the belt prior to operating the machine. Prior to operating

any machine, ensure all safety features are in place and working.

Use a spotter

Having a second set of eyes is crucial. Ask a spotter to help you before you load or unload any equipment. A spotter can let you know if you're too close to the edge of the trailer or in danger of slipping off the side.

Remember, most equipment traling accidents are due to human error, not mechanical failure. Using the best practices you've learned on loading and unloading equipment will be important when you're driving machines on and off the trailer.

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

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Date of safety talk: _____ Leader: _____
Attending: _____