

Spotting safety problems

Always know what's around you whether on foot or in equipment

The accident: A skid steer operator was moving dirt and gravel around a small jobsite. A dump truck backed onto the jobsite behind the skid steer, and two workers approached the rear of the truck on foot. The skid steer operator backed up, pinning one of the workers against the tailgate. The worker collapsed and was later pronounced dead from severe internal injuries.



Illustration by Don Lomax

The bottom line:

A post-accident investigation determined the skid steer operator, who had his back to the dump truck, was not even aware the truck was on the jobsite. The investigation also determined the construction firm was a small business without an adequate safety program in place.

Smart safety

One of the biggest mistakes contributing to this accident is the contractor and workers treating safety as if it's just a matter of common sense. While you do have to use your head – as well as your eyes and ears – on the jobsite, following a clear, specific jobsite safety plan is just as important.

When safety isn't addressed regularly in an official capacity, workers are left to their own devices and

can develop unsafe practices. If you work for a small company that has limited safety resources, the company might not develop a specific safety plan for each jobsite. Being proactive and taking responsibility for your own safety is the best way to protect yourself:

- Walk the jobsite and note any problems you may encounter.
- Ask the crew leader to go over potentially dangerous conditions, limitations or specific hazards you may face on the job.
- Request the information is relayed to the entire crew.

Jobsite awareness

Multiple machines and trucks moving on a jobsite at the same time increase the risk to pedestrian traffic. Although a small company working on a small project may not have a detailed Internal Traffic

Control Plan for the site, a system should be developed to keep machines and foot traffic separate. When multiple pieces of equipment are operating on a site at once, spotters should be assigned to alert machine operators and truck drivers to the presence of other workers and other equipment in their lane of travel.

- Ask the crew leader to designate dedicated lanes of travel for equipment and trucks, as well as defining areas to avoid on foot.
- If you're an equipment operator, signal the spotter before you travel in reverse. The spotter will alert you if it is safe to proceed.
- If you're on foot, signal the spotter when you're on the move so they'll be able to alert equipment operators to your presence.

Information for this Safety Watch was taken 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.

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

