

Breaking bad habits

Following safety guidelines and using proper PPE can save you in the event of a rollover

The accident: A construction foreman was operating a compaction roller along an incline next to a roadway. The rear drum of the roller articulated unexpectedly, causing the roller to slide down the 25-degree incline and tip over on its side. The foreman, who was not wearing a seat belt or hard hat, jumped from the roller but failed to clear the machine in time. The machine's rollover protective structure landed on the foreman, crushing him. He was pronounced dead from blunt head trauma.

The bottom line: A post-accident investigation determined the foreman was a competent equipment operator with more than 20 years of experience. Although the company had a written Injury and Illness Prevention Program, the training program consisted primarily of on-the-job training measured by the supervisor's observation of the employees' job performance. The investigation also determined the machine had a working retractable seat belt the foreman had chosen not to use.

Secure your safety

Accidents aren't always confined to new, untrained workers on a site. Many fatalities are seasoned construction veterans who simply take shortcuts or fail to follow basic safety procedures simply because they've worked for many years without an accident, and have become complacent. No matter how much experience you have, some factors on a construction jobsite



Illustration by Don Lomax

will always be out of your control. Expect the unexpected, and prepare accordingly. Here are some tips to help prevent machine rollover, and to minimize injury in the event a machine starts to tip:

1. Check the grade. Hazards associated with operating equipment increase dramatically when operating machines on surfaces that aren't level. Prior to working on an incline, check the slope and ensure it falls within your roller's safety guidelines. For example, in this accident, the foreman was operating the roller on a 25-percent grade. However, his operator's manual specified safe operation at no more than an 11-degree slope or 20-percent grade.
2. Wear the PPE. You may be tempted to ignore your personal

protective equipment in order to increase your own comfort levels. However, the seat belt is not only designed to hold you in place during normal machine operation, it's also designed to prevent you from slipping or falling out of the seat in the event something goes wrong. Always fasten your seat belt each time you operate a piece of equipment.

3. Remain in the seat. If a machine starts to tip or roll, suppress the natural urge to try and jump from the piece of equipment. It's extremely difficult to clear the ROPS when jumping from a machine. Instead, remain in the seat, keep your knees and elbows close to the body, hold on firmly and try to lean away from the impact when it occurs.

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 (www.cdc.gov/niosh/face; FACE reports 06CA003 and 2000-20). It is meant for general information only.



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