

# Unsafe surroundings

Unrecognized hazards could cause trouble for you – or for someone else

**The accident:** Two workers, a laborer and an equipment operator, were preparing an area for a new concrete slab adjacent to a building. The laborer was on foot, assisting the skid steer operator by directing him into position in front of the building. The laborer signaled for the skid steer operator to stop the machine at the edge of the excavation and dump a load of gravel and sand. The skid steer rolled forward into the depression and tipped forward, pinning the laborer against the building by the bucket. Emergency medical services were called and transported him to the hospital, where he later died from his injuries.

**The bottom line:** A post-accident investigation determined that, while the employee acting as a laborer was a certified equipment operator with experience, the worker actually operating the skid steer was a relatively new employee who had only been operating a skid steer for four weeks prior to the accident. Although the company had a written safety and health plan and required new employees to attend orientation, no training records were kept. The investigation further determined the operator had lifted the loaded bucket higher than the manufacturer recommends.

## Experience matters

While on-the-job training is a common and acceptable form of gaining experience at the controls of a

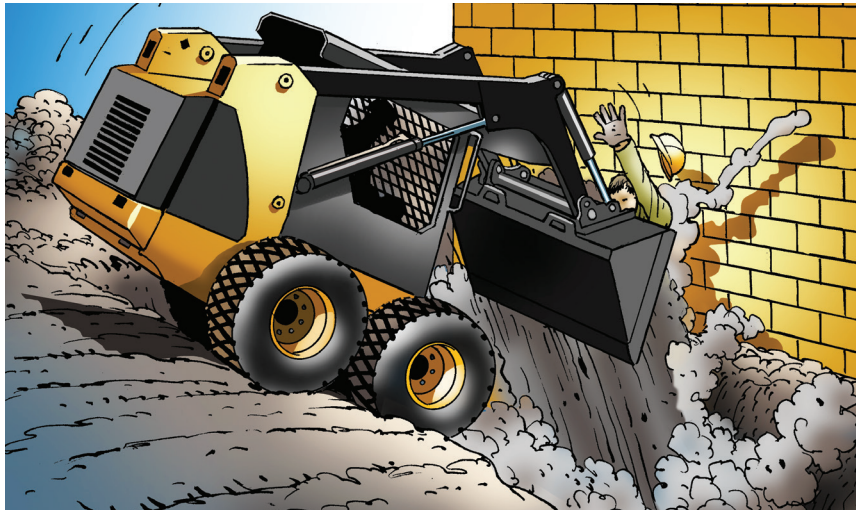


Illustration by Don Lomax

piece of construction equipment, it also requires extensive training beforehand in the correct operation of the equipment, which includes recommended load capacity and hazard recognition.

Precautions to take if you're in the cab:

- If you're new to the piece of equipment you're assigned to operate, take the following steps to ensure your safety and that of others:
- Complete the required company safety training program.
- Familiarize yourself with the individual unit you'll be operating, and conduct a thorough walk-around inspection.
- Know your machine's rated load capacity, and never exceed the load limit.
- Always keep the bucket as low as possible when traveling and turning.

- Lift the bucket only as high as needed to dump a load.
- Stay alert to your surroundings, and stop the machine at once if someone enters your travel path.

Precautions to take if you're on the ground:

- If you're spotting or supervising a new crew member, stay alert and watch for unexpected machine movement.
- Understand the machine operator may not be skilled in hazard recognition, and use hand signals to make him aware of changing conditions.
- Never stand directly in the machine's travel path, and avoid any location where you could be at risk of being struck by an attachment.
- Avoid placing your body between the machine and an immovable structure, such as a building or wall.

*Information for this Safety Watch is from an accident report (FACE 01-AK-015), the Center for Disease Control's NIOSH Fatality and Assessment Control Evaluation program, [www.cdc.gov/niosh/face](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/face), and the Department of Health and Human Services CDC NIOSH Alert "Preventing Injuries and Deaths from Skid-Steer Loaders." It is meant for general information only.*

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

