

Construction Equipment Dangers

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Construction Equipment used on construction jobs often creates dangerous conditions. This week's Tail Gate Safety Topic examines a few situations which should be watched for at all times.

Any moving equipment such as skip loaders, back hoes, trenchers, cranes, hi-lifts, trucks, you name it, should be respected and avoided. Don't just assume that the operator sees you. You could wind up injured or worse. And don't depend on hearing a horn or an alarm to warn you that moving equipment is near. You may not be able to hear the equipment's alarm over other construction noise.

When you see that equipment is traveling backwards keep out of the way and stand clear until the operator has completed his maneuver. Never cut across the path behind any unit while it is backing. You could easily trip and fall under the equipment. For the same reason you should never ride on the running boards, steps or drawbar or any equipment, even for a short distance.

During backing, the operator should have the project foreman clear the area behind the unit and provide direction. No operator should back a piece of equipment into an area without someone clearing the area and giving signals.

Watch out for swinging counterweights on equipment such as cranes. There is often a pinch-point between the counterweights and some obstruction when the unit swings. Make sure there is enough room for workers to pass and if there is not - shut off the area to any access.

Never ride on or near material that is being transported by equipment. The load could shift and you can be thrown to the ground. Also, clearance may not allow for your position and you can be crushed between overhead or side obstructions.

If you must ride on equipment, make sure that all parts of your body are inside the unit, including your arms and legs. In addition, if at all possible, get off any portable scaffold or work platform while the unit is being moved. The time it takes to get off will be much less than the time lost if you fall or the unit tips over.

Never walk alongside moving equipment. Keep in the clear in case it slides or turns, or the load shifts.

When you are working near equipment operating in the vicinity of power lines, don't touch or come in contact with the frame of the unit or the load cables. There is always the chance that the boom of the unit may hit the power lines. Warn the operator and the foreman any time you see this possibility and follow their instructions.

Don't walk under loads on cranes and hoists. Always take the path that avoids danger.

Never clean, adjust, lubricate, repair or work on a machine that is in operation. Stop the machine before working on it and replace the guards as soon as it is done and before operation is resumed.

The safest thing to do around construction equipment is keep away while the equipment is in operation. If you must be near the equipment, make sure the operator knows you are working nearby and stay alert. Keeping your mind on where you are in relation to the equipment will not only prevent injuries but could save your life.

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