

General jobsite heavy equipment safety

OSHA construction regulations are not very specific when it comes to jobsite safety and specific requirements for heavy equipment, machines, and tools. However, you are required to ensure your employees are qualified to operate all equipment safely. OSHA ensures this requirement is covered in two paragraphs in the regulations. They are:

- Unsafe equipment - The use of any machinery, tool, material, or equipment which is not in compliance with any applicable requirement of this part is prohibited. Such machine, tool, material, or equipment shall either be identified as unsafe by tagging or locking the controls to render them inoperable or shall be physically removed from its place of operation.
- Training - The employer shall permit only those employees qualified by training or experience to operate equipment and machinery.

Construction jobsites are noisy and often drown out the telltale signs of heavy equipment in the area such as back up alarms, running engines, and horns. That is why it is imperative that equipment operators and construction crews are always alert to the movement of equipment and workers. Here are some ideas to pass along to your workers:

- Always be aware of moving equipment such as skip loaders, backhoes, trenchers, cranes, hi-lifts, trucks, and other equipment. Never assume that the operator sees them. Never depend on hearing a horn or an alarm to warn them that moving equipment is near. They may not be able to hear the equipment's alarm over other construction noise.
- Keep out of the way and stand clear when operators are backing up. Never cut across the path behind any unit while it is backing. They could easily trip and fall under the equipment. For the same reason they should never ride on the running boards, steps or drawbar of any equipment, even for a short distance.
- During backing, operators must ensure that the area behind the unit is clear. No operator should back a piece of equipment into an area without someone clearing the area and giving signals.
- Flaggers or anyone directing machine operations including backing should have no other duties including answering cell phones.
- Keep an eye out for swinging counterweights on cranes and excavators. There is often a pinch-point between the counterweights and obstructions when the unit swings. If there is not adequate room for workers to pass, the area must be barricaded.
- Never ride on or near material that is being transported by equipment. The load could shift and an employee could be thrown to the ground. Also, clearance may not allow for their riding position and they could be crushed between overhead or side obstructions.

- Employees must not ride on equipment unless it is designed specifically for transporting personnel
- Never walk alongside moving equipment - it slide or turn, or the load may shift.
- When employees are working near equipment operating in the vicinity of power lines, clearances designated in the OSHA regulations must be observed – minimum of 10 feet.
- Never walk under loads on cranes and hoists. Employees should 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 employees must be near the equipment, make sure the operator knows they are working nearby and stay alert. Keeping their mind on where they are in relation to the equipment will not only prevent injuries but could save a life.