

Safety Bulletin

Safe backing procedures reviewed after contractor fatality

An Asplundh employee was fatally injured in Michigan on July 16 as a bucket truck was being backed into a parking space. The passenger got out of the vehicle to assist the driver in backing the vehicle. The incident is currently being analyzed by Asplundh, but it appears the person acting as the spotter was struck by the passenger side right front tire.

When you are in reverse, your range of vision and control over the vehicle are less than they would be when you are traveling forward. When the vehicle is large or loaded, backing up is even more difficult and hazardous.

Please review these tips for safe vehicle backing:

Think in Advance

Don't put yourself in unnecessary backing situations. Avoid reverse gear as much as possible. Go slowly and cautiously if you must travel backwards.

Circle for Safety

Walk around the vehicle to check for people, soft or muddy areas, potholes, tire hazards and other dangers.

Know the Clearances

Check for obstructions, low-hanging trees and wires and any other potential clearance-related problems.

Get to Know the Blind Spots

Mirrors can never give the whole picture while backing. Adjust your mirrors if necessary. Pick out some objects you can see in your mirrors to help you determine your position.

Park Defensively

Choose easy-exit parking spaces that don't crowd neighboring vehicles and park in the center of the space. Go slowly.

Every Backing Situation is New and Different

Even if you visit the same location several times a day, you should be watchful each time for changes and any new obstacles. Use extreme care to watch for pedestrians and other vehicles and equipment.

Use a Spotter

Use another person to help back the vehicle safely. The driver and spotter should use hand signals instead of verbal cues. Make sure you understand each other's signals. The spotter should not walk backwards while giving instructions. Maintain eye contact and stop immediately if you lose sight of the spotter. If you must back without a spotter and it is more than a few feet and in high grass, walk the area back to where you want your left rear tire to stop and place a cone there.



Questions? Contact your supervisor or local Safety and Health manager.