

Operator Visibility Around Heavy Equipment

In some cases, it is nearly impossible for an operator to see a person standing next to, in front of, or behind the equipment. An operator must always remain patient and cautious. Never proceed or use reverse to back into an area without knowing what is there.

Listed below are some of the more common safety tips to observe to help improve operator visibility.

**Before operating at the worksite:**

* Be familiar with the equipment and the operator’s manual.
* Always do a walk around of equipment prior to startup. Ensure workers are clear of equipment before operating.
* Always be sure to be on firm, level ground (work platform) when loading or unloading your equipment. It greatly reduces the risk of rollovers or sliding off the low-bed ramps. If you are unloading on a busy jobsite or high traffic area, make sure people are clear of the unloading area and use a spotter to guide you.
* Know the locations where personnel commonly work or visit. Understand where the restricted zones are located. Wherever possible, keep untrained persons away from the restricted areas set up around your equipment.
* Identify site traffic hazards, poor work platform conditions, obstructed areas (overhead, underground, adjacent structures, etc.) where the equipment will be operating, especially in reverse.
* Always use a spotter when moving large equipment such as cranes, drilling rigs, trucks, and others with limited sight ranges. As a reminder, for any equipment, do not operate in a work area if it is not clear to do so. If unsure, wait until you have a spotter.
* Ensure personnel in the work area are wearing clearly marked high visibility garments.

**Tips for improving operator visibility on the mobile equipment:**

* Make sure windows are clean and unobstructed.
* Verify mirrors are clean and in a position to provide the best visibility to the ground, wheels/crawler tracks and adjacent objects.
* While sitting in the cab, identify the areas of limited visibility and what level of risk each presents.
* Ensure the back-up alarms, horns and other audible controls are working.
* Always use audible and visual control signals to alert others when you will be moving.
* Routinely inspect the condition of windshield wipers and replace when signs of deterioration exist.
* Periodically review and follow all safe work practices and start up and shut down procedures when operating equipment or machinery.

**Consideration should be given to issues related to working around heavy equipment:**

* Maintain a clear line of site between the operator and workers. Blind spots are common. If you can’t see the operator, they can’t see you.
* Communication is arguably the best safeguard against construction equipment related accidents. Whether through simple voice contact, two-way radio or hand signals, effective communication is crucial for preventing workplace accidents. Communicating the current status of a construction site allows equipment operators to stay informed and to stay out of harm's way.