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**Reducing Vehicle Backing Crashes**

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1,065

Safety Spotlight:

[National Radon Action Month](https://www.epa.gov/radon/national-radon-action-month-information)

Five Minutes for Safety:

[Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace?](https://dsps.wi.gov/Documents/Programs/PublicSafety/SBD6894.pdf)

Reducing Vehicle Backing Crashes

**According to the National Safety Council, approximately 25% of commercial vehicle crashes take place because of a backing maneuver gone wrong.** Which primarily results in property damage; however, in some rare instances can involve bystanders or fellow employees that very serious injuries or fatalities can occur.

PMA Companies advises the major causes of backing crashes include lack of visibility (drivers not having the ability see hazards/obstructions), drivers not paying attention to the driving task, and drivers not applying proper driving techniques. Some root cause examples of backing crashes to consider learning from are provided below:

* Blocked view due to obstructions (signs, trees, shrubbery)
* Lack of or inadequately designed mirrors (size, shape, configuration)
* Improperly positioned mirrors (mounting locations)
* Improperly adjusted mirrors (line of sight, reduction of blind spots)
* Dirty or obstructed mirrors (that do not allow the drivers to see hazards/obstructions)
* Blind spots that cannot be easily corrected with mirrors
* Hard to see physical barriers behind the vehicle (posts, cargo, pallets, etc.)
* Low visibility conditions (weather, nighttime driving, enclosed docks, dimly lit parking areas/roadways/delivery areas)
* **Pedestrians or co-workers unaware of backing vehicle (very important to be an alert, free of distractions, safe pedestrian too)**
* Driver unfamiliarity with the unique characteristics of their equipment
* Lack of or improperly adjusted backing assistance technology (back-up cameras, sonar, or radar warning devices)
* Turning while backing (body of vehicle or trailer obscures target area)
* Distraction of driver by bystanders, traffic, improper signaling of helper, etc.
* Physical items (vehicles/people/etc.) which move behind the vehicle prior to, or during, the backing maneuver

The most important guidance tip on preventing backing crashes is **“Don’t Back Up If At All Possible.”** Whenever possible, limit or better yet, avoid backing maneuvers. Driver training should include the requirement to drive and park in such a way to avoid backing up; which includes planning an exit, when the driver arrives to the destination.

Claims

FY25 YTD

Workers Comp

227

254

Claims

FY24 YTD YTD

Lost Time

FY25 YTD

Lost Time

FY24 YTD

1,015

When a backing maneuver is required, PMA Companies shares these practical solutions:

**See the Entire Picture (STEP) or Get Out and Look (GOAL)**

* Look before backing
* Walk around the vehicle and note all objects or situations that could be a hazard

**Signal Your Intentions**

* Before backing, tap the vehicle’s horn to alert pedestrians or other motorists
* Use a spotter where possible and when using a spotter, ensure the driver and the spotter understand each other’s hand signals and make sure the spotter is always in view (the driver should confirm the spotter is never positioned between the vehicle and a stationary object)
* Backing the vehicle is still the responsibility of the driver, so the driver must double-check clearances at each side, to the rear, and overhead while the spotter directs

**Back Slowly and Carefully**

* Turn off radios and lower window during backing, to hear any verbal alerts/warnings
* Start slowly to allow other vehicles and pedestrians who may have unexpectedly approached the back of the vehicle, to identify that the vehicle is backing
* Back slowly in order to stop quickly
* Set yourself up to back out of traffic, not into traffic (position vehicle in a way that allows an easy reverse into an open space, if needed to quickly change lanes or exit, instead of having to maneuver forward into a potentially congested lane with oncoming traffic)
* Avoid “blind side” backing (parking of a truck into a space-constrained on the passenger’s side)

**Use Your Mirrors**

* Use the vehicle’s mirrors, particularly the right side-view
* Hanging out of the driver’s side of the vehicle allows good left side sight, but not right-side visibility
* Small convex mirrors mounted below side mirrors and fender mounted mirrors (commercial vehicles) enhance the visibility provided by (standard side) flat mirrors
* Check mirrors for proper adjustment frequently

**Additional Suggestions**

* Equip vehicles with enhanced backing control equipment including back up alarms, sonar, radar systems, and back up cameras
* Use all available aids to stay aware of surroundings such as reflections of the vehicle in windows and shadows thrown by the vehicle
* These systems should be maintained properly including keeping mirrors, back-up cameras, and other warning devices clean and free of obstruction
* Vehicles should stop before loading dock contact—get out and check the final distance to dock (serious injuries can occur when bystanders are pinched between vehicles and docks)

In summary, backing crashes are preventable and avoidable when drivers can see hazards/obstructions, pay attention to the driving task, and apply proper driving techniques. Please remember the basic rules to backing safely to prevent a loss:

* Avoid backing whenever possible
* Adjust your mirrors (prior to putting the vehicle in motion) and be comfortable with them (keep the equipment clean)
* Secure your vehicle before backing (check all around for clearance – including overhead)
* Make the move slowly and carefully (avoid distractions, use clear communication)

*IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information presented in this newsletter is intended for internal State of Wisconsin agency consideration in loss prevention efforts. Due to space limitations, may not always be all-inclusive in identifying all material associated with topics discussed. It is encouraged to adjust the contents to fit the specific audience of your operation.*

Consumer Safety

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**E-Learning: Drive Safe Wisconsin**

Released in 2021, the Bureau of State Risk Management partnered with the Department of Transportation in creating a “Drive Safe Wisconsin” training course to help mitigate injuries and loses involving motor-vehicles. The course provides information about driving risks and best practices to help reduce the chances of motor vehicle collision, injury, and loss by improving knowledge and behavior while on the road. The training series is focused on four important driver safety topics that are common contributing areas of risk & loss for the State of Wisconsin. The topics included share valuable information that can dramatically lower the risk of injury when behind the wheel including Using Safety Belts, **Seeing Well**, Avoiding Dangerous Driving Behaviors, and Adjusting to Road Conditions. The “Drive Safe Wisconsin” training course is available through [Employee Self Service](https://ess.wi.gov/psp/ess/EXTERNAL/HRMS/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&) (ESS) via the “My Learning” icon for agencies and via [UW System OSH Training](https://www.wisconsin.edu/ehs/training2/) web page for campuses. Keyword search “Drive Safe” in Leader (Cornerstone). The course is broken in four sessions, topically as outlined above, and total run time of entire program is approximately 40 minutes. This training is beneficial for both personal and work-related operation of vehicles and encourage anyone operating a vehicle to complete this training.