



Loss Control Best Practice

Line of Business: Auto

Subject: Preventing Backing Accidents

Purpose:

The purpose of this best practice is to help public entities with the prevention of vehicle backing accidents.

Recommendations:

Backing a vehicle is something drivers probably do several times a day, day in and day out without giving it a whole lot of thought. But according to the national statistics on backing accidents, it is something that drivers need to pay very close attention to from a risk management / loss control standpoint.

To give you an idea of the scope of this issue, here are some statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

- Each year there are at least 500,000 backing accidents of some type.
- Of the half million accidents, 15,000 included some sort of injury.
- Approximately 210 people are killed annually from backing accidents, mostly children under the age of 5 (31% of all fatalities).

In addition to the above, the National Safety Council estimates that the average property damage caused by backing accidents is \$7,400 per event. These statistics are alarming given the fact that many public entity vehicle operators drive thousands of miles going forward each year but probably only one or two miles in reverse.

Backing is not an easy maneuver, which can be further complicated by the following factors.

- The driver's seat faces forward
- Larger, longer, and taller vehicles have larger blind spots
- Mirrors can distort images
- Driver distractions
- Low visibility conditions
- Physical barriers that make it difficult to see.

However, with all of these factors at play, there are best practices that drivers can follow to reduce the risk of a backing accident.

Recommended Best Practices

Source: Texas Department of Insurance's *Vehicle Backing Safety FactSheet*.

- Get to know the vehicle's blind spots. Mirrors never give you the whole picture.
- Think in advance. Avoid unnecessary backing situations.
- Park Defensively. Choose easy exit parking spaces.
- Take extra precautions when parking in alleys. If you cannot pull all the way through or turnaround, back in so you can enter the street going forward.
- Do a walk-around. Gives the driver a firsthand view of the backing area.
- Know the clearances. Check for obstructions during the walk-around.
- Every backing situation is new and different. Guard against becoming complacent.
- Use a spotter. Whenever possible, use a second person to help guide the driver using hand signals.
- When driver's spot for themselves, return to the vehicle as soon as possible after the walk-around before the conditions can change.

Long Term Solutions

- Installation of backing aids in vehicles. Cameras, sonar systems, back-up alarms (Note: Rear visibility technology must be present on all vehicles under 10,000 lbs. manufactured on or after May 1, 2018).
- All drivers need to practice backing the types of vehicles they will be driving while on the job.
- Create and support driver training programs. Effective programs teach and review backing techniques, equipment usage, hand signals, hazards to avoid and other topics that reduce the risks.

Most every backing accident is preventable which means the driver did not do everything reasonably possible to prevent the accident. Backing accidents will often times involve multiple factors, which can be managed by driving defensively and practicing safe backing habits.

Resources and References:

Visit the following sites for additional information:

Texas Department of Insurance Vehicle Backing Safety FactSheet

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/pubs/videoresource/fsvehiclebackin.pdf>

OSHA Preventing Backovers

<https://www.osha.gov/doc/topics/backover/index.html>

OSHA Backover Regulations

<https://www.osha.gov/doc/topics/backover/regulation.html>

OSHA Backing Safety Solutions - Spotter Safety

<https://www.osha.gov/doc/topics/backover/spotter.html>

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