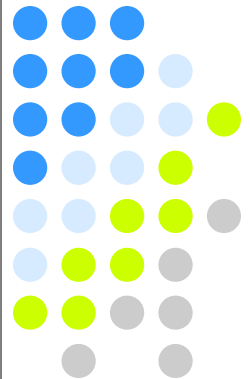




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Backing Accidents & Stationary Objects

All of us know that in the course of our daily driving experience, be it in a commercial motor vehicle or our privately owned vehicle, we find it necessary to put the transmission in reverse. Did you know that striking an object while backing is a leading cause of property damage accidents? Striking stationary objects follows close on the tail of those backing hiccups. How many times has the professional driver tried to explain how the “other guy” pulled behind their backing unit and never saw them? What about the dreaded “ghost” stationary object that appeared out of nowhere causing the crumpled front bumper or crimping the tractor steps? Safety Managers and Insurance Adjusters have yet to see a backing accident or striking a stationary object as “Non-Preventable”. In fact, most liability insurance carriers will accept and mitigate any filed property damage claim resulting from these types of incidents to prevent any chance of small claim litigation suits.

With all this said, let’s review techniques to reduce the chance of having a backing accident and/or striking a stationary object:

Plan ahead to avoid backing whenever possible. When practical, park the vehicle so it will not have to be backed at a later time.

Be aware of all obstacles which may impede the backing maneuver. Walk around the unit, checking the rear of the vehicle and anticipate where other motorists or pedestrians could enter the path of the backing unit. The path must be clear of all obstacles.

Never back a vehicle when rear windows or mirrors are covered with frost, snow or other substances that keep the driver from visually monitoring the path the vehicle is taking while backing.

Once the path is checked, the driver be-

hind the wheel having started the engine and transmission in reverse, should check the area again by continually looking in your mirrors to “visually clear” the path.

Honk the horn once or twice to warn everyone that you are going to backup.

Have installed backup warning devices when reverse is engaged.

Use safety cones. Set the cones to create a clear path the vehicle will take while backing. These cones are great reference points for the driver to judge distances.

Use a spotter to assist the driver while backing.

When entering a business to make a delivery, keep your eyes moving to identify all hazards which may affect the vehicle. When safe to do so, park and get out of the unit to walk around to create a safe path for forward travel.

If the situation calls for tight maneuvering, again use of safety cones to identify blind hazards and use as reference points.

Always, keep your eyes moving to visually clear your path for pedestrians and other vehicles.

Never hesitate to request spotter assistance.

To sum up, the three points to consider preventing backing accidents and striking stationary objects are:

1. Awareness of what’s around you
2. Keeping your eyes moving
3. Visually clearing your path of travel