By the Numbers: 10 Equipment Safety Tips



Share, review, and discuss these heavy equipment safety tips with your equipment operators to reduce the chances of an incident.

1. **Blind spots**
   - Heavy equipment operators must be 100 percent sure that no one is behind them or in their blind spots when moving, even if this involves getting out of the machine and checking.
   - If vision is limited, have a spotter stand in a safe, visible position to guide and direct you.
   - Inform those working around you for the day of your blind spots and require them to make eye contact with you before coming in the equipment's vicinity.
   - High-visibility vests are mandatory on all sites.
2. **Communication**
   - Always be in constant communication with the people working around you.
   - A two-way radio is the best form of communication; if that option is not available then use hand signals from a spotter who has been properly trained.
   - Communication with operators should be touched upon at every safety meeting and reinforced by the foreman on site.
3. **Seatbelts**
   - Wearing your seatbelt in heavy equipment is just as important as in a moving motor vehicle.
   - Not only will it save your life in the case of a rollover, but it also keeps you firmly in your seat when operating on rough terrain, saving energy, and reducing close calls.
4. **Mounting and Dismounting**
   - Falls and stepping on and off are some of the biggest causes of injury. This includes entering and exiting the cab of a machine.
   - Always maintain three points of contact when getting on or off your equipment.
   - Never jump.
5. **Loading/Unloading Equipment**

- Always be sure to be on level ground 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 job site or high traffic area, make sure people are clear of the unloading area and use a spotter to guide you.

6. **Overhead and Underground Hazards**

- Before work starts on any job site, all overhead obstructions such as power lines and low clearance should be identified and flagged.
- Call your area's "one-call" service to be sure underground utilities such as water, sewer, gas, and electrical are located and marked with color-coded paint and flags.
- Play it safe when getting close to the underground utility and hand dig to uncover.
- When leaving holes that workers or the public can fall into, be sure to set up barriers and snow fencing.

7. **Lock-out/Tag-out**

- All employers must train and have procedures in place to ensure the machine or energy source is rendered inoperative before any employee performs servicing or maintenance.
- This includes hazards such as pinch points, attachments, and raised loads.
- Look for picture warnings, locks, and tags and heed their instructions/warnings.

8. **Load Limits**

- Be aware of the load limits of equipment of any equipment you're operating. Depending on the equipment set-up and size the load limits can change drastically.
- When lifting loads – make sure loads are secure with proper rigging attachments, and always inspect rigging to ensure it's in good working condition.
- Confirm all workers are at a safe distance when lifting and moving loads.

9. **Walk-around Inspection**

- Inspect equipment at least once daily before operating.
- This involves walking around with a predeveloped checklist of components to check for good working order.
- Hydraulic hoses, undercarriage, oil levels, stress points, etc., are all areas that need to be inspected. Report issues to the maintenance/safety department and don't operate until machine is fixed.

10. **Know Your Limits**

- Operating heavy equipment can be a stressful job at times even for a seasoned veteran.
- Never put yourself in a situation you don't feel comfortable in, regardless of your instructions.
- Get out of the cab and look around if you're unsure about working on a slope or around hazards.

Staying calm and alert throughout the day will allow you to be more productive and will translate to a positive working environment for those around you.