Maintain Your Guard Around Mobile Equipment



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Every year, more than 100 workers across North America die and thousands more are injured in highway work zones—areas where road construction, maintenance or utility work is being undertaken.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Workers in highway work zones are at risk not only of being struck by passing highway traffic; they also face the possibility of being hit by mobile equipment. In fact, nearly half of the worker fatalities in highway work zones are attributable to construction equipment contacting workers on foot.

Motorists passing through highway work zones must, by law, obey all signs and signals, but it's obvious that many do not. They may be annoyed at being expected to slow down from cruising speeds or having to unexpectedly stop for several minutes. Other motorists may be gawking at construction activity or otherwise not paying attention to flaggers or other vehicles ahead.

Workers on foot also face the potential hazard of slow-moving construction vehicles reversing or moving into their paths and crushing them. These workers, dwarfed by huge machinery such as earthmovers or dump trucks, often aren't seen until it's too late.

EXAMPLE

A 63-year-old heavy equipment operator on a bathroom break was fatally injured while walking between two parked compactors.

A dump truck driver had been using only his driver's side rearview mirror while reversing and the truck struck one of the compactors, whose parking brake was not functioning properly.

The compactor moved, crushing the worker between it and the other compactor. He was pronounced dead on arrival at hospital.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Arrive at work well-rested, not impaired by drugs or alcohol, and not

distracted by problems at home. Stay focused on your job.

- If you are working in highway work zones, you should have received safety training regarding how to work as safely as possible in a high-traffic area. If you aren't comfortable with the level of training you've received, talk to your supervisor.
- Maintain eye contact with mobile equipment operators. If you can't see them, they likely can't see you either.
- Never take a shortcut across an area where mobile machinery is operating.
- Make sure your employer provides you with, and that you wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE), including high-visibility vests.
- Pay attention to what's going on around you. High-visibility garments won't protect you if you can't be seen. Stay out of the path of equipment and vehicles.
- Learn about traffic control devices separating you from traffic. If you see skid marks or barrels and cones knocked down, report these to your supervisor.
- Watch out for passing vehicles and equipment, including wide ones having protruding mirrors or loads. Never approach a moving vehicle. Get the operator's attention and make sure he stops before approaching.
- Never hitch a ride on mobile equipment and don't ride or work from the box of a company pickup truck.

FINAL WORD

Highway work zones are complex places. You need to stay alert for and avoid hazards from both motorists and co-workers operating mobile equipment.

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