

Landscape Safety Series: Safety With the Loader/Backhoe¹

Lance Fluegel and Bradley Rein²

BEFORE USING THE MACHINE

- Read the owner's manual to learn the characteristics of your machine.
- For your personal protection you will need to wear some or all of the following: sturdy pants and shirt, safety shoes, hard hat, safety goggles or glasses, gloves, hearing protection, and respirator for dusty conditions. Sunscreen protection is vital in Arizona if not under a roof.
- Check the loader/backhoe for the presence of the following safety devices in good working order: rollover protective structure (ROPS), seat belt (if ROPS equipped), guards, shields, backup warning system, lights, and mirrors.
- Fill the fuel tank while engine is off and cool. Never fill inside a building. Do not smoke. Wipe up any spills immediately.
- Check the machine daily for broken, missing, or damaged parts. Make the necessary repairs or replacements.
- Keep the machine clean -- especially steps, hand rails, pedals, grab irons, and floor of the cab. Slippery surfaces are very hazardous.
- Remove or secure loose items in the cab that could interfere with operating the controls.
- Check the work area for hidden holes, obstacles, drop-offs, etc. Clear children, pets, and bystanders from the area.
- Check overhead for utility lines, roofs, and other obstacles.
- Request Blue Stake service to locate underground cables, gas lines, water, and sewer lines before digging. You need to request this service in advance.

- Always use the hand rails, ladders, and steps provided when mounting the machine; never grab controls or the steering wheel.
- The cab was designed for one person -- allow no riders, especially children.

OPERATING THE LOADER

- Adjust the seat, fasten the seat belt, set the brake, and place transmission in park or neutral before starting the engine.
- If machine is in a garage be sure ventilation is adequate. CARBON MONOXIDE KILLS!
- Start the engine and check all controls for proper function. Check horn and backup alarm. Do not use if anything is faulty.
- If the backhoe is still attached be sure to use chains and locks to prevent it from swinging.
- If the backhoe is removed you may have to use counterweights. Check your owner's manual.
- Keep the working area as level and clean as possible. Use the bucket to grade the area frequently.
- Always carry the bucket low for good visibility and maximum stability.
- Use extreme caution when backfilling to avoid collapsing the wall of the trench.
- When undercutting high banks or material piles be alert for falling rocks and/or cave-ins.

OPERATING THE BACKHOE

- Keep the loader bucket on the ground.
- Level the machine for maximum stability.
- Operate the backhoe only from the seat.

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- Never swing the bucket over a truck cab. Do not load the truck while the driver is still inside.
- Dump the bucket uphill if possible when operating on a slope. If you must dump downhill swing slowly to avoid tipping the machine.
- If using the backhoe as a hoist, do so with the weight over the back of the machine -- NEVER THE SIDE -- to avoid tipping. Be sure the load you are lifting is balanced, and move the boom slowly to avoid swaying the load.

SAFE STOPPING PROCEDURE

- Park the machine on level ground if possible and set the parking brake. Place transmission in park if so equipped.
- Lower the loader and backhoe buckets to the ground.
- Stop the engine and remove the key.
- Work the hydraulic controls to relieve pressure.
- Wait until all motion has stopped and then dismount carefully using steps and safety holds. Do not jump from the machine.