



**Farm Safety Association**  
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**Tailgate-Skid Steer**

## Skid steer loader safety

**Instructor:** *The following script can be used to deliver a 15-minute training session to employees. You may wish to have a skid steer on hand to point out hazards and demonstrate safe operating procedures.*

*The text emphasizes important points related to skid steer safety. It is suggested that you try to stay strictly on topic. Obviously, you will need to be prepared to answer questions.*

### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

- **Rollover protective structures and safety screens should be in place at all times.**
- **Never exceed a skid steer's rated operating capacity.**
- **Always carry loads low.**
- **Keep the heavy end of a loader pointed uphill when travelling up and down slopes.**
- **Try to avoid driving over rough surfaces.**

### Know your machine

- Balance is the key to the stability and turning capability of a skid steer. With no load in the bucket, roughly two-thirds of the weight is on the rear axles. Weight shifts to the front wheels when the bucket is loaded.
- Overloading can make a skid steer excessively front heavy. This reduces stability and handling response. Don't exceed a loader's rated operating capacity.
- *Never* attempt to operate the steering levers or any other hydraulic controls while standing outside of the cab! Hydrostatic drive means that the skid steer will respond instantly when the levers are engaged.
- Operation of controls becomes almost instinctive for an experienced skid steer driver. Novices can become confused as a result of having to perform a number of functions at one time. If this happens, it is usually best to remove hands and feet from the controls. All machine functions will stop when pressure on the controls is released.
- *Never* remove the rollover protective structure from a skid steer. Keep side screens in place—fatal crushing injuries have occurred when individuals were caught between the loader arms and the skid steer frame on “unscreened” machines.
- The seat belt and seat bar should be employed whenever you are operating a skid steer.
- Always make sure that attachment locking devices are in place, even if you are switching attachments for only a few minutes. If not locked, an attachment could break free and roll back

down the loader arms, or fall onto a bystander.

### Safe skid steer travel

- Skid steer stability decreases as the loader arms are raised. Always keep the bucket as low as possible when traveling or turning.
- Avoid steep slopes and rough terrain. Always travel up and down slopes, never across.
- Move up and down slopes with the heavy end of the loader pointed uphill. Remember, no load=most weight on the rear of the skid steer; loaded bucket=more weight on the front.
- Try to go around obstacles, rather than over or through them.
- Stay as far away from creeks, gullies and ravines as the banks are deep. Otherwise, the earth could shear and send the skid steer crashing to the bottom.
- Road travel with a skid steer is not recommended.

### Work efficiently

- Drive slowly into the manure pack or material pile, then raise the front of the attachment. Back away with the load in the tilted-up bucket or fork.
- Drive to the unloading site with loader arms down. Stop, raise the arms, and drive forward slowly until the bucket is just over the spreader or pile.
- Use the hydraulics to keep the attachment level while raising the lift arms at a slow, even rate. Be prepared to lower the load quickly if the skid steer becomes unstable.

### Work safely

- Familiarize yourself with warning devices, gauges, and controls. Study operating procedures outlined in the manual.
- Check for obstacles or soft soil conditions in the work area.
- Check for overhead powerlines.
- **Riders must never be permitted on skid steer loaders.**
- Never use a skid steer as a work platform or personnel carrier—hydraulic failure is always a possibility.
- Adjust speed to suit working conditions and terrain. Avoid sudden stops, starts, or turns.
- Never lift, swing, or otherwise move a load over anyone. In fact, you should insist that all bystanders leave the area before you start work.
- Take care when handling loose materials, such as rocks. Lifting the arms too high and rolling the bucket back too far could cause the objects to fall into the cab. That's why it is so important to keep

- the bucket level while the arms are being raised.
- Avoid dumping over fence posts or similar obstructions that could enter the cab if the loader were to tip forward.
- Take care when backfilling. The trench wall could collapse under the skid steer's weight.
- Never undercut a high embankment. The earth could give way and bury the loader.
- Never place any part of body or limb under raised loader arms. That's why it is so important to keep the safety screens in place.
- If it is necessary to carry out repairs with the loader arms raised, be sure to lock the arms in place.

### Are there any questions?

Finally, let's take a moment to review some of the "Do's" and "Don'ts" skid steer loader safety.

#### DO:

Fasten the seat belt and employ the safety bar before starting a skid steer.

Keep the attachment level while raising the loader arms.

Keep the arms lowered while traveling.

Point the loader's heavy end uphill when driving up and down a slope.

#### DON'T:

Attempt to activate skid steer controls while standing outside of the cab.

Drive across a slope with a skid steer.

Use the skid steer bucket as a "work platform".

Give anyone a ride in the skid steer's cab.

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