

Backing Up and Spotters

About 10 minutes to deliver

Why reversing kills people on foot, what the standard actually requires, and how to be a spotter who does not get run over.

A truck going forward hits people who walked in front of it. A truck going backwards hits people the driver never knew were there. That is why reversing gets its own talk.

WHAT THE RULE SAYS

1926.601(b)(4) is short. No vehicle with an obstructed view to the rear gets used unless one of two things is true:

- it has a reverse signal alarm audible above the surrounding noise, or
- it is backed up only when an observer signals that it is safe.

Read that again. If the alarm is drowned out by a compressor, a saw or a jackhammer — and on most sites it is — the alarm does not count and you need the observer. Earthmoving equipment carries the same requirement under 1926.602.

BEFORE YOU REVERSE

- Walk it. Get out and look at what is behind you. Thirty seconds beats the rest of your life.
- Know where people are. If you cannot account for everyone on foot near your path, stop.
- Plan not to back up at all. Pull through, loop round, turn the load area into a one-way. The best reversing control is not reversing.

BEING THE SPOTTER

The spotter gets hit more often than people expect, because the spotter is the one person standing in the danger zone on purpose.

- Stay out of the path. Off to the driver's side, never directly behind, never between the vehicle and a wall, a trench edge or another machine. That pinch is where spotters die.
- Stay visible in the mirror. If you cannot see the driver's face, the driver cannot see you. Lose sight, and the truck stops.
- One spotter, agreed signals, agreed before the truck moves. Two people waving means the driver picks one and the other is watching something the driver isn't.
- Both of you stop for anything unexpected. Not "probably fine" — stop, sort it, then move.

ON FOOT

Never assume a driver has seen you. Make eye contact, wait for an acknowledgement, and stay out of the swing radius of anything that pivots.

ASK THE CREW

- Where on this site are we reversing today, and can we design that out?
- Can everyone actually hear the backup alarms over the noise right now?
- If you are spotting, where exactly are you standing and can the driver see you there?

29 CFR 1926.601 • 29 CFR 1926.602

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Backing Up and Spotters

About 10 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.601 · 29 CFR 1926.602

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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