

Backhoe Safety

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Selecting the right backhoe operator can be challenging. Whether it's your most experienced employee or a new hire, whomever you choose, ensure the employee is properly trained to operate the equipment.

When selecting someone to train new backhoe operators, select, an experienced operator with good communication skills or a qualified employee/person. OSHA defines a qualified person as one who has the knowledge, training and experience and is capable of evaluating an employee. Another option is your equipment dealer. Many dealers offer free training courses for equipment operators.

Before training is complete, management should ensure that each operators is completely comfortable on how the equipment operates and that they fully understand the equipment's capabilities. If your organization owns or leases different makes and models of equipment, ensure that equipment operators are familiar with the equipment operations and controls prior to operating the equipment.

Every employee on your jobsite should be trained on backhoe operations:

- + Clearly identify and label all machine controls and ensure the manufacturers' safety equipment is working properly.
- + Install and maintain equipment attachments as well as their operating systems according to manufacturers' specifications.
- + Follow the manufacturer's instructions for using positive locks on quick-disconnect equipment and ensure the connection is firmly attached to the equipment.
- + Make frequent visual inspections of quick-disconnect systems, especially after changing attachments.
- + Instruct equipment operators to conduct visual and operational checks on all machine systems and operating controls prior to the start of each work-shift.
- + Review and confirm communications signals between machine operators and workers before each work-shift.
- + Wear your seat belt at all times.
- + Ensure the stabilizers are properly set, with no rocking.
- + Let the equipment to warm-up before operating the controls. This allows the hydraulic fluids to properly circulate and warm-up.
- + Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended load capacities.
- + Instruct operators to lower the boom to a safe position with the bucket on the ground and turn off the machine getting off the equipment for any reason.



- + Provide training for workers to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions such as unstable excavations and passing traffic.
- + Be aware of the equipment's established swing areas and blind spots before the backhoe operator starts the equipment. Mark the danger zone with rope, tape or other barriers.
- + Ensure workers remain outside the backhoe swing areas and stay clear of attachments when hoisting materials or equipment.
- + Prohibit workers from working or standing under suspended loads.
- + Do not allow workers to approach the backhoe until the operator acknowledges the worker's signals and shuts down the equipment.
- + Always use spotters or signal persons around operating equipment.
- + Prohibit workers from riding on the steps or inside backhoe loader buckets.
- + Continually evaluate safety programs to address changing worksite conditions.

