

Backover incidents happen when heavy equipment or a vehicle strikes a worker while backing up. On construction sites, these incidents are among the most deadly types of struck-by accidents.

Backover incidents can occur for many reasons like:

- the operator can't see behind the vehicle
- a backup alarm is not working
- jobsite traffic patterns are not clearly marked
- the spotter and the driver lose communication
- a worker enters a blind spot without being noticed



Backover incidents continue to claim lives on construction sites each year. These three real events show how quickly a routine task can turn deadly when visibility, communication, or awareness breaks down.

Grade Checker Run Over by Motor Grader

A grade checker was seriously injured when a motor grader backed over him during parking lot construction. He had walked behind the grader to replace missing marker feathers and entered the operator's blind spot. As the grader began backing up, the operator didn't see the worker kneeling behind him, and the left tires ran over him, causing severe injuries.

Flagger Killed by Backing Tack Truck

A flagger was struck and killed by a tack truck that was backing up in a residential roadway work zone. The flagger was facing away from the reversing truck when a nearby dump truck driver tried to warn him by waving his arms. The tack truck driver, unaware of the worker behind him, continued backing until another driver's warning caused him to stop and discover the victim lying on the ground.

Company Co-Owner Fatally Struck by Work Truck

At a levee construction site, a company co-owner was fatally injured when a heavy-duty work truck backed over him. After stepping out of his pickup, he walked behind the superintendent's truck, which had limited rear visibility. The superintendent began backing to reposition, unaware the co-owner was behind him, and found him lying under the truck after the impact.

- Heavy equipment with limited rear visibility must have a working reverse alarm or use a spotter to signal when it's safe to back up.
- Operators must know their equipment's blind spots and stop immediately if visual or radio contact with the spotter is lost.
- Modern cameras, radar, or detection systems can help prevent backovers, but they never replace visual checks or direct communication.
- Every jobsite should have an internal traffic control plan with clearly marked travel lanes, entry and exit points, and no-pedestrian zones.
- Workers on foot must wear high-visibility clothing, stay alert, and understand the blind spots of nearby vehicles and equipment.
- Never approach or cross behind heavy equipment until the operator acknowledges you with a clear visual or verbal signal.
- Stay outside of swing areas and backing zones, and always use designated walkways to stay clear of moving equipment.
- Avoid distractions and complacency. Stay focused, listen for alarms, and be aware of vehicle movements at all times.

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PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INCIDENT REPORTS

- Grader Incident: Washington State FACE SHARP Report 71-142-2015; stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/211402
- Tack Truck Incident: NIOSH FACE Report Number 2007-02; stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/23413
- Work Truck Incident: Washington State FACE Report 71-247-2023; <https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face>

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