

How to Use a Backhoe Safely

Plan your day to maximize productivity at the job site:

- * Select the right bucket size for the job.
- * Stake out the area to be excavated and use flags to mark it.
- * Always call before you dig (a nationwide, toll-free number is available that provides the phone number for your specific area; call 811). If you don't call, you won't know about underground utilities that you could damage or disrupt. Injury, death and property damage have resulted when excavators didn't have the site marked with utility placements before they began their work.
- * Never work in areas with inadequate overhead clearances.

Check for applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and with other authorities having jurisdiction for any special requirements such as using shoring equipment or digging the trench in the shape of a "V" to lessen the possibility of a cave-in. When you begin digging with your backhoe, start at one end of the trench with the machine positioned so you can move backwards as the excavation progresses. First, lower the front stabilizers, then the rear stabilizers.

When digging a trench, coordinate the action of the boom, dipper, and bucket. It may take a while to get the hang of it. Every situation will be a little different, but here are a few tips:

- * When digging a trench, you can set the bucket teeth at a shallow angle and let the dipper do most of the work. Or you can set the bucket teeth at a steeper angle and fill the bucket using a combination of boom and bucket action.
- * Continue digging a few inches deeper each time until the trench is at the desired depth. Then move the machine backward using the following procedure:
 - * Raise the boom and bring it in line with the center of the loader.
 - * Curl the bucket and pull in the dipper.
 - * Retract the stabilizers.
- * Press the traction-lock override button or its equivalent on your machine and slowly move the unit back a few feet from the trench. Don't move back too far, or you will decrease the maximum digging depth or run out of reach.

As you dig, keep these safety tips in mind:

- * Keep bystanders out of the swing area.
- * Keep your feet behind the shields at all times.
- * Never operate your backhoe from the ground.

- * The boom, dipper and bucket are very powerful and can cause serious injury or death if you don't follow proper precautions.
- * Stay away from overhangs or ditches and do not dig under stabilizers.
- * If you are working on a slope, keep the machine level. Try to dump uphill to maintain stability.
- * If you need to pick up an object using the backhoe, keep the load balanced. Swing the load low and slow. Keep the load close to the loader for stability. Never swing the load over anyone.

Anytime you need to leave the backhoe, lower the bucket or attachment to the ground, stop the engine, remove the ignition key and exit the backhoe.

When you are ready to drive to the next job site, make sure that you have fully raised both the front and rear stabilizers and you've put the backhoe seat into the "down" position for better visibility. Install the transport locking pin before driving to the next job.

While en route, here are some additional reminders:

- * Never drive the loader from the backhoe seat. Always return to the loader seat before driving the machine to a new work area to obtain the protection provided by the seat bar, seat belt and ROPS.
- * Avoid obstacles that could exceed the clearance between the backhoe and the ground.
- * On slopes, drive the loader straight up and then back it down. Never drive across slopes.
- * Check doorways, underpasses and tunnels for proper clearance.
- * Before you drive a loader and backhoe up a trailer ramp, remember to disengage the backhoe-frame locking levers and raise the lift arms slightly to provide clearance between the stabilizers and the ramp. Lock the backhoe-frame locking levers after you park on the trailer deck. Also, drive the unit onto the trailer only while seated in the loader seat.

Becoming a proficient backhoe operator requires knowledge, skill and good judgment:

- * Read your backhoe operation and maintenance manual.
- * Pay attention and follow the safety alert symbols on the backhoe.