

Vehicle safety: Watch your backing

All backing crashes are preventable. In general, the best way to prevent them is to avoid backing whenever possible. When you can't avoid backing, use the following safety strategies:

- Back in on arrival instead of on departure.
- First, conduct a visual walk-around of the vehicle to check for maneuvering room and pedestrians.
- Have someone outside your vehicle guide you.
- Continuously check all mirrors while backing.
- Always back slowly while continuously looking and listening for signs of trouble.

To download a flyer version of this information to post in your shop, see www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/vehicle_safety_poster.pdf. ■

**Vehicle Safety:
Avoiding Backing Accidents**

One in four accidents involves backing. Considering that the average driver operates in reverse less than a mile every year, this statistic is even more alarming.

To prevent backing accidents, plan ahead and avoid backing whenever possible. Drivers should reduce backing operations in the first place.

When you must back up as a last resort, the following tips will help you avoid collisions:

- Continuously check all mirrors while backing.
- Always back slowly while continuously looking and listening for signs of trouble.
- Try to position the vehicle to avoid backing.
- If backing cannot be avoided, it is better to back in upon arrival than to back out later while departing.
- Conduct a visual walk-around of the vehicle to check for maneuvering room or pedestrians.
- Whenever available, use a passenger to guide you during backing operations.

All backing accidents are preventable. The following key failures can cause collisions during backing operations:

- Failure to look before backing
- Failure to check blind spots
- Failure to conduct a walk-around
- Backing at an unsafe speed
- Failure to check mirrors often for potential hazards

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Compliance deadlines: Help drivers see workers, read signs

Compliance dates for two federal rules—one about worker visibility, the other about street name signs—are getting closer.

Worker visibility

November 2008 is the compliance deadline for the FHWA final rule (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 23, Part 634 under Worker Visibility): “All workers within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway who are exposed either to traffic . . . or to construction equipment within the work area shall wear high-visibility safety apparel.”

Section 6E of the MUTCD already requires that flaggers wear high-visibility apparel when working on any roadway. The federal rule extends the requirement, at least on federal-aid projects, to all workers in the right-of-way.

Workers are defined as people on foot including construction, maintenance, and survey crews; utility employees; emergency responders; and law enforcement officers.

High-visibility safety apparel is defined as Class 2 or 3 performance level garments meeting the requirements of ANSI/ISEA 107-2004.

Street name signs

January 9, 2012, is the compliance deadline under MUTCD Section 2D.38 Street Name Signs (D3). This section details sign lettering height on two-lane roads:

On two-lane roads with a speed limit greater than 40 mph, the lettering on

ground-mounted street name signs should be at least 6 in. high in upper-case letters, or at least 6 in. upper-case letters and 4½ in. lower-case letters. When the speed limit is 25 mph or less, the lettering may be a minimum of 4 in. high.

Your agency may want to begin planning a five-year phased sign replacement program to avoid a major budget hit in 2011. When replacing signs, remember to consider MUTCD recommendations for retroreflectivity and colors. ■



High-visibility safety apparel.