

Backing Techniques

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study determined that over 90% of backing accidents can be attributed to one of two causes:

- The driver was unaware of an obstacle
- The driver used improper backing techniques

By following simple accident prevention techniques, you can prevent backing accidents:

- Preplan trips to avoid or to minimize the need for backing.
- The majority of backing accidents with bodily injury involve children under the age of 5. Walk around to inspect your vehicle before backing, especially in an area where young children can be anticipated.
- Never take any situation for granted. Even though you may have parked or backed into a location many times, evaluate the location to determine if clearances have changed or if new obstacles are present.
- Check all your mirrors when backing. Know the mirror blind spots, the clearance to all obstacles and the exact distance to your stopping point.
- Be aware of what is going on around you at all times and perform all backing maneuvers SLOWLY.
- When backing out of a narrow roadway, ask someone to be your guide, and have him/her signal when it is safe to back into traffic. Instruct the guide to use appropriate hand signals rather than voice commands.
- When entering a narrow roadway that does not permit drive through or turnaround, back into the roadway, if allowed by local ordinance, since it is usually safer to back into the area with less traffic. This will enable you to see the traffic as you exit the roadway.
- Park in the middle of the parking space. This will allow you room to exit the parking space without backing and provide space if backing is required.
- Park defensively to prevent your vehicle from rolling into another vehicle. If parking on an incline, turn the front wheels into the curb.
- Experience is required to develop good backing techniques. If you have access to a designated area to practice backing, use it. Learn exactly how the rear of the vehicle responds to every little movement of the steering wheel.
- Check to see that backup lights function properly. In addition to providing illumination in darkness, they act as a warning to others that the vehicle is moving in reverse.
- Back up alarms are required on construction equipment, but they can also be installed on any other type of vehicle. These alarms provide an audible warning when vehicles back up and should be considered if a lot of backing occurs.
- Back up slowly. When backing the vehicle, drivers should always expect something to get in their pathway. Slow backing will enable quicker stops.
- Roll down a window, turn off the radio and put down the cell phone so you are able to hear outside warnings.