

Year after year backing accidents account for more than 25% of all vehicle-related accidents? The good news is that these accidents are often preventable. While incidents associated with backing often involve property damage, bodily injury to individuals can occur as well. In fact, backing collisions cause over 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries per year, many of which involve children.

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study determined that over 90% of backing accidents can be attributed to one of the two following causes: (1) the driver was unaware of the obstacle or (2) the driver used improper backing techniques.

## TIPS TO PREVENT BACKING ACCIDENTS

### **Don't Be Complacent**

Most people involved in backing accidents are not necessarily bad drivers. Many have just become complacent because they have backed hundreds (perhaps thousands) of times without incident. One of the most important things you can do to avoid backing injuries is to be vigilant.

### **Don't back up unless it is absolutely necessary**

You'll likely not be able to completely avoid backing, but with proper planning and proper positioning of your vehicle, you can reduce the amount of backing, and thereby reduce your exposure to backing incidents.

### **Be aware of clearances**

If you must back, take the time and effort to be aware of clearances on both the sides of your vehicle and the top of your vehicle. Even though you may have parked or backed into a location many times, always evaluate the location to determine if clearances have changed or if new obstacles are present.

### **Use helpers or guides to assist you in backing.**

Whenever possible, prior to any movement, you and your guide should review the hand signals that will be used to back the vehicle. As the driver, you maintain full responsibility for the movement of the vehicle.

### **Go Slow**

Perform all backing maneuvers slowly (no more than 1 mph). This is not only for your benefit but for the benefit of others who may be near your vehicle when you are backing.

### **Remember the Circle of Safety**

When no helper is available, get out and walk around the entire vehicle. This "circle of safety" should be used to observe anything that could be in your path (or come into your path) when backing. Be sure to also observe areas above ground level such as clearance from the top and sides of your vehicle.

### **Use all available aids**

Use all available aids to keep you aware of your surroundings. These include your backup camera, side mirrors, your rearview mirrors (if any), reflections of your vehicle in windows, and shadows thrown by your vehicle. Remember to make sure your mirrors are properly adjusted before moving your vehicle.

### **Back into driveways or alleys if it is possible**

There will be occasions when you must either back when parking or back when leaving. This is particularly true when you must use alleys or driveways. As a general rule, it is better to back into driveways and alleys and then pull-forward onto the street when leaving, instead of backing into traffic. This puts you in the position to operate with full visibility when entering traffic again. If you need to back out of an alley or driveway, ask someone to be your guide and signal when it is safe to back into traffic.

### **Make sure they see you**

Make sure prior to backing that you turn on your 4-way flashers and give two quick taps of your horn. This will let those around you know that you are there and are about to make a maneuver.