

FRONT-END LOADERS

If you operate a front-end loader, you have probably experienced the bouncing, weaving, and “road walk” that leaves you feeling as if you are not in total control of the equipment. Hopefully, you have recognized this as dangerous and have learned to slow down, especially when traveling downgrade, when empty, or when traveling on particularly bad terrain.

There are other hazards to be considered as well: (1) getting caught in the pinch points of the bucket arms or the pivot area of an articulated machine, (2) collision, (3) running over a pedestrian, (4) spilling a load, (5) machine upset, (6) falling over an edge, (7) a rider falling off, (8) the operator falling when mounting or dismounting the equipment, (9) mechanical failure and (10) a raised bucket falling.

Back Up Cautiously: Accidents occur most frequently when backing. Just because you have a back-up alarm on your loader, it is not safe to travel in reverse without concern for any distance. You must still be aware of your surroundings, use properly adjusted rear view mirrors and, when lighting is poor, use both front and rear lights. Never throw the engine into reverse without looking behind you. Don’t be afraid to use your horn, too. Back-up alarms soon become part of the din on a jobsite. If someone ventures into the danger zone around where you are working, sounding a warning blast and stopping would certainly be in order.

Permit No Riders. No one, other than the operator, should ride the equipment. The bouncing and jarring can cause passengers to be thrown off. The usual result is, the passenger is run over. The cage (the Roll Over Protective Structure) is designed to protect the operator in the event of rollover. In order to provide this protection, the operator must be inside the cage, using his seat belt. A passenger is outside of this area is obviously not protected.

Extreme Caution In Pivot Areas: Articulated loaders have a very nasty pinch point at the pivot. Operators should always check both sides of the machine before moving it, to make sure no one is in this dangerous area. If you are the mechanic or the oiler, you put yourself at serious risk every time you get in the pivot area. Install the safety bars or links before working in this area of articulated equipment. These will help protect you by preventing the machine from turning. Such action could crush you.

Overhead Hazards: Be cautious if you are around, between, or under a raised bucket or its arms. When you need to enter these “danger zones” make sure the machine is shut off. Have the operator step down from the machine and give you the keys. Instruct him to remain off the equipment until you tell him it is alright to remount. Have the bucket lowered to the ground unless the work you plan to do requires it be raised. Install jaws or blocks under raised bucket arms so they cannot fall on you if something goes wrong.