

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
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*Safety Tips: Skid
Steer Loader Safety*

Skid-steer loaders are versatile and very useful. But like all equipment, it is only as safe and useful as the operators allow it to be. Operators who are well trained in the operation and maintenance of these machines can make good use of their versatility. However, carelessness in the operation and maintenance can result in serious injury to the operator and to the machine.

Following we shall discuss some of the dangers and also some safety hints that will reduce your potential for possibly being a victim of one of these hazards:

- ✓ Skid-steer loaders can be very useful, but also can be very dangerous.
- ✓ You should never operate a skid-steer loader unless you have been thoroughly trained and authorized to do so.
- ✓ Serious injuries or deaths have occurred when skid-steer loader operators:
 - ~ are pinned between the bucket and the frame.
 - ~ are pinned between the lift arms and the frame.
 - ~ are pinned between the loader and another object.
 - ~ lose control of the loader and it overturns.
 - ~ allow passengers to ride in the bucket.
 - ~ allow children to operate the machine.
- ✓ Serious injuries also occur when operators either take off or modify such safety equipment as the rollover protective structure or ROPS, the seatbelt, restraint bars, side screens or overhead shield.

TIPS FOR PROPER MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING A SKID- STEER LOADER-

- Before getting on a skid-steer loader, walk completely around the machine. Check to see that no one is under it or close to it.
- Be sure that the lift arms are lowered and the bucket is flat on the ground. The only time you should get on a loader when the lift arms are up is if they are being held up by a mechanical restraining device. The hydraulic system alone isn't enough. See your supervisor if you have any questions.
- When getting on a loader, face the seat and grab the handholds on the machine. Don't use control levers in place of handholds.
- Never jump on or off the machine. Use both hands when getting on or off.
- Before leaving the operator's seat, lower the bucket flat on the ground, put the controls in neutral, set the parking brake and turn off the engine. Face the machine when you are getting off.

◁Never remove, modify, or bypass skid-steer loader

OPERATING A SKID-STEER LOADER-

- ✓ Carefully review the manufacturer's instructions before operating a loader. Ask your supervisor for help if you don't understand the instructions. The instructions will help you to become familiar with the parts of the machine and its safety equipment. They'll also explain how to properly start the engine.
- ✓ Be sure you are in the operator's seat when you start the engine.
- ✓ Stay completely inside the cab, making sure that your feet, arms, legs and head remain inside.
- ✓ Stay seated when you operate the controls.
- ✓ Wear your seatbelt and keep it fastened. Also, keep the restraint bar in place.
- ✓ Carry your load low. Don't carry items that could easily fall off or roll off.
- ✓ Avoid sudden stops, turns or starts.
- ✓ Load, unload and turn on level ground whenever possible.
- ✓ Don't drive across steep slopes. Drive straight up and down the slope, with the heavy end of the loader pointed uphill and the bucket lowered to the ground.
- ✓ Always look back when you're operating the skid-steer loader in reverse. Make sure no one is in the way.

OTHER SAFETY TIPS-

- Never allow passengers on the skid-steer loader - including children.
- Don't park a loader on a hill or slope.
- Never lift, swing or move a load over another person.
- Be careful not to overload the bucket.
- Keep your skid-steer loader in good condition, such as regular inspections and keeping the controls clean of mud, snow, ice and other debris.
- Be sure that all the lighting is clean and clear of mud or other soils. It should have a slow moving vehicle sign (SMV) mounted on the cage behind the operator's seat.
- Always be on the lookout for potential hazards, such as cables, rocks, stumps, ditches and sudden drop-offs.
- Stay away from the edges of banks and edges of gullies.
- Don't wear torn or ripped clothing or clothing with drawstrings.

Skid-steer loaders can be extremely useful in many applications in our agriculture industry. But, as mentioned earlier, the operator must be fully trained, maintain a safety conscious attitude, and remember to daily inspection checks and do the maintenance repairs as needed. The skid-steer loader is only as good as the operator allows it to be with his focus on the aspects of its operation.