



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



Backing Into Trouble Safety Message

When we are walking around on the job, particularly when handling material, we are subject to many dangers. Think about the following scenarios and see if you have ever been in a similar position:

An employee was inside a truck removing empty drums onto the truck's elevator tail gate and lowering it. Another employee was removing the drums and sending the elevator tail gate back up. The employee inside the vehicle had his back to the tail gate as he pulled the next drum towards the tail gate - which he thought was even with the bed of the truck. As he swung the drum into place and stepped onto what was now open space, he fell off the truck onto the lowered gate. Following him down was the drum he was moving and he sustained additional injuries.

Two errors in judgment caught up with the victim. First, he ASSUMED that the tail gate had been returned to a safe position. And despite the fact that he was moving a heavy, bulky item, he did not check to make sure of his safe positioning. Second, he was working in an unwise manner: He moved backwards with a heavy object. There is always the danger that the load may get out of control and cause an injury. A load should always be in front so you can see where you are going, and so you will be in the clear if the load gets away from you.

In another incident, an employee was walking backwards directing a vehicle into an aisle-way inside a warehouse. He did not see material on the lower rack sticking out into the aisle. He backed into and fell over the protruding object. The truck continued to back up and pinned him against the rack before it could be stopped. A cut on the leg and a badly bruised elbow was his reward for this unsafe act.

The employee was not watching where he was going. Making matters worse was an unsafe condition of an object protruding into an aisle-way.

When you are on foot, it is always dangerous to move backwards, particularly when handling materials. It is quicker and safer to move in a forward direction. Avoid moving backwards whenever you can. If you must move in a backward direction, check your path before you move and as often as possible while moving.