BACKING ACCIDENTS

Backing accidents continue to plague many companies, even though they are among the most preventable. If more drivers thought about what could be behind them, they would back less, hence, there would be fewer backing accidents. If you consider the limited view caused by blind spots, it is understandable why backing accidents are among the most frequent types of accidents in the transportation industry.

These accidents usually involve only minor damage; many of which are under deductibles. However, these accidents can be an early warning sign of bigger, more serious accidents to come. Each accident, regardless of cost, should be thoroughly investigated to determine its preventability. It is very important to remind your drivers at safety meetings or during individual discussions to follow the safe and proper techniques to prevent backing accidents. You can help reduce the frequency of backing accidents by following these simple guidelines:

1. **Make it a habit to get out and look** – If you are backing a long distance and have little room, you may need to get out and look several times. Check the road surface, note depressions, fixed objects, and the possibility for pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Check your overhead and side clearance. Proceed immediately before the picture changes.
2. **Tell your spotter what to watch for and where to stand** – Agree on hand signals, have them watch for blind spot areas, and make sure they stop pedestrians and/or vehicles. The spotter should stand in a safe area that gives you and the spotter clear visibility to the area in which you are maneuvering. If you lose sight of your spotter, stop immediately.
3. **Avoid parking too close to other vehicles** – Many backing accidents happen at truck stops or rest areas. If you have to park close to other vehicles, it is always a good idea to write the company name and unit number of the truck parked next to you. This will help in recovering damages should you discover your unit damaged after returning.

The most common reasons for backing accidents are:
- Misjudging overhead clearance
- Misjudging actions by pedestrians
- Failure to check mirrors
- Failure to check around the entire vehicle
- Failure to use a spotter
- Assuming other vehicles will see you
- Aggressive/reckless attitude
- Driver inattention or fatigue
- Lack of patience