



# HAND SIGNALS FOR SPOTTERS

## Toolbox Talk Lesson Plan

Backing large vehicles is one of the riskiest maneuvers faced by drivers. Large vehicles have large blind spots. Work vehicles often maneuver in tight spaces, and in close proximity to workers and other obstacles. A key component to safely backing large vehicles is the use of a spotter. Effective communication between the driver and the spotter is critical. Standard hand signals should be used by spotters. Hand signals should be distinctive so that they are easily seen by the driver in a rearview mirror that can be vibrating from an idling engine.

Every agency that uses large vehicles, (such as dump trucks, backhoes, jetting or vacuum trucks, or sanitation trucks) should have a written backing policy. Key components of the policy should include:

1. Backing should be avoided whenever possible. Operators should make every effort to position / park vehicles so that backing is not necessary to leave the location.
2. Guidelines for backing a vehicle;
  - a. When the operator is alone – the operator / driver shall stop the vehicle at a safe location and shall, when possible; walk around the vehicle to make sure the path is clear and look for objects / people that may move into their anticipated path of travel. Any non-department persons in the area shall be advised that the vehicle will be backing. If the driver, due to conditions, can not safely leave the vehicle to complete a walk-around, the driver shall re-evaluate if backing is absolutely necessary, and if so, sound horn and proceed at an extremely slow pace.
  - b. When a passenger is present – The vehicle shall stop in a safe location and the passenger shall exit the vehicle. The vehicle shall remain stopped while the passenger moves to the rear of the vehicle. The passenger shall check both sides of the vehicle for obstructions and then take a position to the driver's side rear of the vehicle, visible in the driver's side rearview mirror. This person shall be referred to as the Primary Spotter.
    - i. The passenger shall act as the Primary Spotter for the duration of the backing maneuver.
    - ii. Hand signals shall be those pictured in Paragraph 4 (*or substitute your own*).
  - c. When additional departmental personnel (passengers or pedestrians) are present – additional spotters shall be used when needed and for extremely close maneuvering. Additional spotters shall be positioned at the corners of the vehicle. Additional spotters should either communicate to the driver through the Primary Spotter or by voice commands.
  - d. Spotters shall wear ANSI Class 2 or 3 high-visibility apparel. During low light or visibility conditions, Primary Spotter should be illuminated or use a flash light to give signals to drivers.
  - e. Primary Spotter must move to remain visible to the driver in the driver's side rear view mirror. **Drivers must immediately stop and remain stopped if the Primary Spotter can not be seen in the mirror.**
3. All backing will be performed at slow speed and with extreme caution.
  - a. For difficult locations (multiple obstructions, extremely close obstructions, etc.) the driver and spotters will discuss the backing plan prior to the maneuver.

*This lesson plan is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, please contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046. **Presenters should attach sign-in sheet to this lesson plan.***

4. Hand Signals for Primary Spotters

*Departments may substitute or add their own desired hand signals.*



**It is safe to proceed backwards**

*One hand at about head level, with palm facing Spotter.*

*May include a slight waving motion*



**Pull forward when safe to do so**

*One hand pointing to the front of the vehicle*



**Stop the vehicle**

*Arms crossed over the head.*

*Should also include the voice command, "STOP"*



**Proceed slowly; you're close to an obstacle**

*Hands apart, representing relative proximity to the obstacle.*

*Hands may move closer as the vehicle nears the obstacle*



**Move the vehicle to the right**

*Right hand extended at shoulder height, with index finger pointing to the right*



**Move the vehicle to the left**

*Left hand extended at shoulder height, with index finger pointing to the left*



**Raise the truck bed, load, etc.**

*Hand about shoulder height, with index finger pointing up*



**Lower the truck bed, load, etc.**

*Hand about waist height, with index finger pointing down*

*Our thanks to Ocean Township (Monmouth County) Public Works for their assistance.*