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Skid Steer Safety

Skid steers are a common piece of equipment found in a variety of industries. While they are small in size, the danger these machines can pose can be large. It is critical to take time to recognize the hazards present during the operation of skid steers so that the necessary best practices can be followed.

Hazards Associated with Operating a Skid Steer:

There is a magnitude of possible hazards for those individuals operating skid steers as well as those who work around these machines.

Some of the major and more common hazards to consider:

- Struck-by hazards pose a serious threat for those working around skid steers. The operation of these machines often includes working in high traffic areas. Reversing is also a common necessity during work tasks. These factors paired with blind spots creates a huge risk for struck-by incidents to occur.
- Crushed-by hazards are also a major concern while operating a skid steer. Workers who are on the ground around this equipment can be pinned and crushed between a skid steer and another object if they find themselves in the line of fire. Those operating the skid steer can also fall victim to being crushed by their own machine. NIOSH looked at 37 fatalities involving skid steers and found that 29 (78%) of them resulted from “pinning between the bucket and frame or between a lift arm and frame”.
- Tip overs or roll overs are another leading cause of fatalities of the operators of skid steers. In the same study referenced above, 6 of the 37 fatalities resulted from roll overs.
- Pinch points are common on skid steers and can easily lead to injuries to body parts.

Best Practices for Safely Operating Skid Steer Loaders:

- Always adhere to the manufacturer's guidelines for operation. Never operate a skid steer without proper training.
- Do not work under the raised arms or bucket of a skid steer, even if it is off. Always put the bucket all the way down before exiting the machine.
- Setup work areas and tasks in such a way that ground personnel are not located in the line of fire. Stop work anytime sight is lost of anyone working around the skid steer.
- Never overload the skid steer. Always travel with the bucket or load low to the ground.
- Always wear your seatbelt or engage the restraint bar if one is equipped.
- Inspect safety equipment prior to use. Inspect items such as the roll-overprotective system, guards, seatbelt, interlock system, etc. Never remove or alter safety devices or guards from the equipment.
- Stay seated when operating a skid steer.
- Never carry riders or lift anyone with the attachment.

Summary:

While skid steers are not as imposing as huge articulating dump trucks or excavators, they still are dangerous to operate.

Lack of training and complacency of the danger of these machines results in many injuries every single year.

Take time to evaluate the hazards of using this equipment.