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Heavy Equipment Safety - Two Significant Hazards

Heavy equipment such as cranes, bulldozers, front loaders, dump trucks, excavators, etc., are used on virtually every single construction site. There are many hazards created by the use of this equipment for those who operate it and especially for those who work around the equipment. It is easy to become complacent when working around these machines every single workday.

Hazards Created by Heavy Equipment:

There are many different hazards associated with heavy equipment. The two major hazards associated with these work tasks that are responsible for the majority of injuries and fatalities are:

1. Struck-by Incidents – One of the biggest exposures for a fatality on a construction site is ground personnel being struck by moving equipment. OSHA states approximately 75% of struck-by fatalities involve heavy equipment such as trucks or cranes. It is everyone's responsibility to look out for one another while working around this equipment.

Safety Best Practices – Work areas where heavy equipment should be clearly marked and barricaded. Unnecessary foot traffic should be eliminated in these barricaded work areas.

Ground personnel entering a work area where there is equipment operating need to make their presence known to all operators in the area.

Operators should avoid backing whenever possible and need to stop their work task if they lose sight of any ground personnel.

A spotter should be used if equipment is operating in a tight area or when operating around ground personnel.

In certain situations, it could more hazardous to use a spotter. Plan work tasks accordingly and eliminate the need for a spotter if possible.

2. Caught-in or between incidents – These incidents are remarkably similar to struck-by incidents; however, there are differences. A struck-by incident is when an object striking a person causes an injury.

A caught-in or between incident is when there is an injury due to crushing between two objects. An excavator bucket swinging around and striking a person in an open field would be a strike-by incident. An excavator counterweight that turns and pins a person against a wall would be a caught-in or between incidents.

Many of the same safeguards discussed above will protect workers from being involved in a caught-in or between incidents.

Safety Best Practices – One important safeguard in protecting yourself from these incidents is to stay out of the line of fire and always leave yourself an “out.” You should first always consider the safest place to be around equipment with regard to the line of fire.

Never put yourself in a situation where you do not have an out to escape danger.

It is important to always be able to get out of the way if other safeguards fail and you are put in a situation where you can become a victim of these incidents.