



General Backhoe Safety



West Virginia University
Environmental Health and Safety

Pre-Use Activities

- Review and understand information provided in the backhoe operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Perform a pre-shift backhoe inspection, including checking fluid levels, lights and signals, tires, hydraulic cylinders/lines, loader bucket/excavator connections, and guards and shields. Inspect backhoe for worn or loose parts such as lynch/cotter pins or lug nuts.
- If a backhoe fails the pre-shift inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the backhoe from service by attaching a red tag that states "OUT OF SERVICE". Complete red tag with appropriate information.
- Annual backhoe training is required and should incorporate both general backhoe training and specific training review on the backhoe that employees may use.



Operating Precautions

- Before starting and while operating a backhoe, look for people or obstructions in the vicinity of the backhoe.
- Employees working within an area where a backhoe is operating must wear flagging garments (i.e., orange vests) and at least, a hard hat, steel-toed boots, and long pants.
- Never carry passengers on a backhoe.
- Learn the locations of underground and overhead utility lines, ditches, stumps, boulders, and other hazards or obstructions in the work area.
- Extend the backhoe stabilizers prior to starting an excavation task.
- Never exceed the engine, excavator, or lift capacities of the backhoe.
- Swing the backhoe arm uphill when excavating on a hillside.
- When transporting material in a loader bucket, keep the loader bucket as low to the ground as possible to maintain backhoe stability.
- Only raise the loader bucket for the purpose of dumping material.
- Reduce speed when turning, crossing slopes, or driving on rough, slick, or muddy surfaces.
- Dismount (or mount) a backhoe when the engine is shut off.
- Never adjust or work on a backhoe unless the engine is shut off and hydraulic pressure has been de-energized.
- In order, backhoe shutdown procedures are: (1) turn off the engine; (2) lower the loader bucket and backhoe arm; (3) and set the parking brake.