

# Operating A Backhoe Safely

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A skid steer loader with backhoe attachment or a backhoe loader in general can be very productive if it is operated safely and efficiently. The best way to get the job done safely and efficiently is to know yourself, the job site, and your equipment. (e.g. treat insomnia so you're well rested before working).

Even though the models of backhoes will vary, there are safety features with all of them that include steps and grab handles for getting on and off of the machine. Backhoes also feature frame lock levers and attaching levers to keep the backhoe securely fastened to the loader frame during operation as well as transporting.

In addition to these standard safety features, there are some backhoes that provide a safety chain. The safety chain will prevent the backhoe mounting frame from rotating backwards and unexpectedly trapping the operator, which can result in serious injury or death. Therefore, it is always important to know and check all of the mounting and attachment points and the safety chain before you operate the backhoe.

If you've attached the backhoe to the loader, you should take a moment to inspect it and perform any necessary maintenance. Check for broken or damaged parts, also making sure to check for leaks, cracks, excessive wear, and check the control levers.

The warning and safety signs and instructional decals are very important and will help you to avoid injury. You should always take them seriously and replace any damaged or missing decals.

Every 8 hours or so, you should grease all of the zerk fittings, and check the hydraulic fluid and oil on a daily basis. If the fluid is low, the backhoe will not operate. Therefore, you should always take the time to check your machine.

Anytime you have to leave the operator seat of the backhoe, you should lower the bucket or attachment to the ground, turn the engine off, remove the ignition key, then exit the machine.

When the time comes to drive to the next job site, you should always make sure that you have fully raised both the front and rear stabilizers and make sure you've put the backhoe seat into the "down" position for better visibility. Before you drive off, make sure that you've installed the transport locking pin.

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

- - Always select the right size bucket for the job.
- - Stake out the work area that is going to be excavated and use flags to mark the area.
- - Never work in areas that have inadequate overhead clearances. Always make sure that you keep bystanders or other workers out of the swing area. If anyone gets in the way of the boom swinging, they can very easily get injured. The machine has no feelings, therefore you should always be aware of who is around you and where they are standing.