



# BACKING BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

BECAUSE SAFETY MATTERS

**SWANA**  
SAFETY

According to industry and OSHA data, backing represents approximately 25 percent of all injuries and accidents in the solid waste collection industry. Use these tips to stay safe on the job.

## BECAUSE SAFETY MATTERS

### Before You Leave the Yard You Should:

#### Determine you are fit to drive

Make sure that you are mentally and physically prepared to drive. Do not drive a vehicle if you feel dizzy, light-headed, exhausted or distracted. Do not drive if under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This includes prescription and OTC drugs that should not be taken when operating heavy machinery. Make sure you are trained to use the specific vehicle that you are driving.

#### Conduct a thorough pre-trip inspection

Check the vehicle's brakes, horn, back-up lights, four-way flashers, and back-up alarm and video camera (if equipped) for proper working condition. Check all fluid levels, look for broken or cracked hoses, leaks, loose components or fittings. Ensure gauges are working properly. An inspection should take between ten and fifteen minutes to complete.

#### Clean windows and mirrors thoroughly

Unobstructed windows and mirrors ensure a clear view. Never back a vehicle when any mirror is covered with dirt, frost, snow or other substances that keep you from visually clearing the path the vehicle will take.

#### Adjust mirrors for maximum visibility

Mirrors are a major key to any backing maneuver. Adjust your mirrors while the vehicle is in a perfectly straight line and you are sitting in the driver's seat in your normal comfortable sitting position. Get help adjusting the right side mirror, if possible.

#### Get to know the vehicle's blind spots

Mirrors and back-up camera can never give the whole picture while backing. When using your back-up camera get to know where the picture in the monitor ends and where the mirrors begin to pick up a fixed or moving object.



## **Safety Points to Think about Before You Back Up.**

### **Plan ahead and avoid backing whenever possible**

Do not put yourself into unnecessary backing situations. When practical, avoid parking the vehicle in a way that will require it to be backed at a later time. If you plan your routes ahead of time, you may be able to avoid certain backing situations.

### **Park defensively**

Carefully survey the parking opportunities when you arrive at customer or work site. If possible, choose an easy-exit space that does not crowd neighboring vehicles and which has minimal vehicle/foot traffic. Avoid the temptation of pulling into the most convenient location in order to speed up the process. Sometimes, choosing a poor parking space is a matter of necessity - but in many cases, a better defensive position is available if you take the time to look and evaluate.

### **Situate your vehicle in the best possible position**

When parking, make sure your vehicle is situated in the best possible position.

- Pull Through: Choose an easy-to-exit space where you can pull into and out of the space without backing.
- Back upon Arrival: If you cannot pull through, try to back into a space upon arrival, so the surrounding's information is most current.
- Pull In: If you must pull into the spot upon arrival, situate the vehicle appropriately so as to make the turn on the driver's side. This will minimize turning and allow you to see the back of the vehicle swinging into position.

### **Plan your exit in alleys**

When parking in an alley, be sure to plan your exit. If an alley does not permit driving all the way through or room to turn around, then back into it slowly (if local ordinances permit), so that when leaving, you can drive your vehicle forward into the street.

## **Steps to Take When You Have No Choice but to Back Up.**

### **No helpers on the riding step**

Never back up your vehicle when someone is riding the rear step. Helpers should be in the cab or standing in a location visible to the driver wearing high visibility PPE.

### **Determine space limitations**

Is the space wide enough? Is the loading dock platform high enough or low enough? Be aware that the path may slope up or down, making it difficult to judge vehicle clearance at your destination point. Measure and determine proper distances vertically and horizontally to safely park or unload your freight.

### **Utilize technology**

If your vehicle is equipped with them, be sure to use your 4-way flasher and back-up alarm, and periodically tap your horn prior to backing and as you continue backing. These warning devices are designed to alert others of your presence and can make other drivers and pedestrians aware of your intentions. Also, utilize any radar or other detection devices, if installed. Assume that other vehicles or individuals do not see you coming.

### **Get Out And Look (GOAL)**

Before backing, get out of your cab and walk around your vehicle to look and see what lies between you and your backing destination. Check for workers, pedestrians, soft or muddy areas, potholes, tire hazards and equipment hazards. When backing long distances, it is recommended to stop and recheck your path of travel. Be aware that steep inclines and large SUVs, vans and trucks add to the difficulty of seeing behind a vehicle

### **Don't forget to look up!**

Look for awnings, pipes, framing, fire escapes, wires, etc. that may be in your way. Look up, down, all around and under the truck before backing. The entire path the vehicle will take must be clear of obstacles. Also, anticipate where another vehicle or pedestrian could hit the rear of the vehicle while you are backing.

### **Back slowly and cautiously**

Have complete control of your vehicle. Back slowly. Use the lowest possible gear or idle speed and do not accelerate. Keep in mind that other drivers and pedestrians may be distracted (e.g. using cell phones)

### **Use a guide or spotter**

Although ultimately the responsibility of backing safely falls on the driver, it is helpful to use a reliable, well-trained guide or spotter whenever possible to assist when backing. An extra set of eyes could make all the difference, particularly in situations where there are blind spots or when someone or something could come into your path. Ensure guide or spotter is equipped with high visibility PPE. Also, do not use a spotter or guide who is not trained or who is not in good physical or mental condition. Contact a supervisor to request a spotter or guide if needed.

### **Start backing within a few seconds after check**

When you must spot for yourself without a guide, return to the vehicle quickly. This will allow very little time for people and/or obstacles to move behind the vehicle.

### **Measure and mark the distance carefully**

As you back into your space, get out of your truck and pace off the length of the space from the dock to the rear of the vehicle. Then pace off the same distance from your driver's door back to the end of the vehicle. Place an object on the ground at this measurement point. Then as you back up, you will be at or near the dock when your driver's door reaches the object.

### **Check area again**

Once you are behind the wheel, with the engine running and the vehicle in reverse, check the area again by turning and visually clearing the path that the vehicle will take. Use all side mirrors to constantly check and visually clear your path.

### **Blow the horn**

Blow the horn to warn everyone that you are going to back up when appropriate based on location and time of day.

### **Be extra cautious in inclement weather**

Be extra cautious in inclement weather as pedestrians, especially small children, can slip on ice and snow, becoming lodged underneath a vehicle's tire.

### **Steps to Take When You Use a Spotter**

- Ensure the spotter is in good physical condition (alert, not under the influence, good eyesight, etc.)
- Ensure spotter is wearing high visibility PPE.
- Maintain visual contact between the driver and spotters or other workers on foot when working close to the vehicle and when backing.
- Check both side mirrors repeatedly when backing
- Use a reliable spotter positioned to see both the driver and any blind spots behind the vehicle when backing.
- Use standard hand signals when backing.
- Stop the truck if the spotter must change positions.

- Immediately stop the maneuver if visual contact with the spotter is lost.
- Spotter should remain clear of the rear of the vehicle when the backup lights are on or the alarm is sounding.

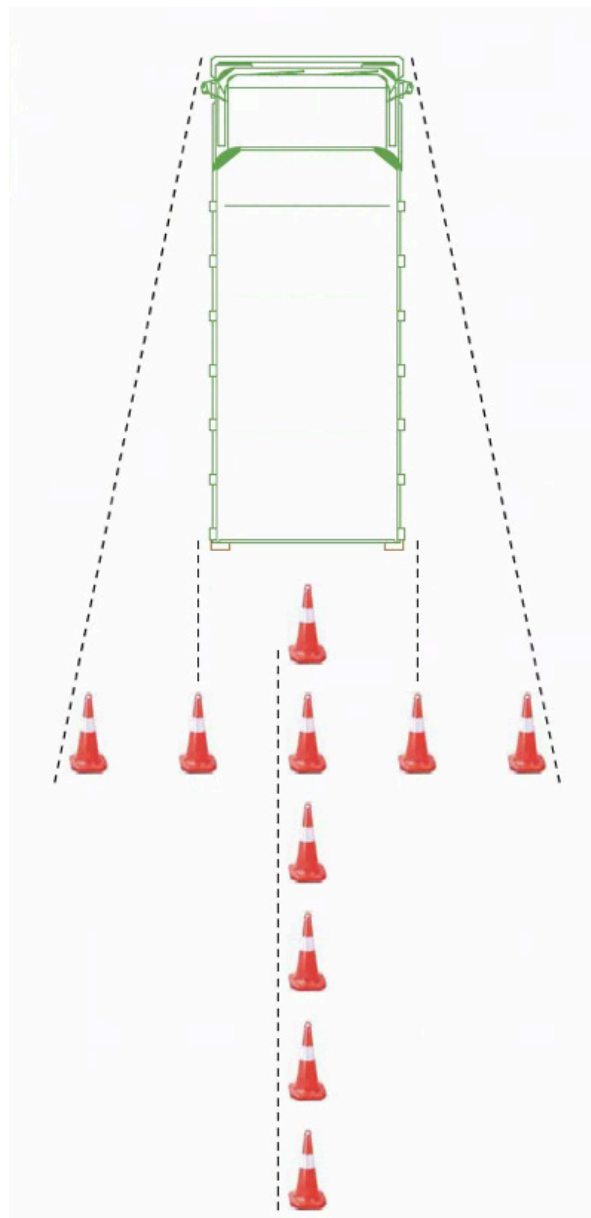
### Mirror and Back-Up Camera Proper Adjustment Exercise

Below is a great exercise for supervisors to work with their operators to adjust their mirrors and back-up camera.

1. Place cones in a cross pattern.
2. Have operator back up to the first cone.
3. Operator shall adjust mirrors so they can see the two farthest outside cones and the edge of their rear of their truck. This provides them with an idea on their truck's width view using both mirrors.
4. The middle cone they backed up to is to allow back-up camera adjustments. This will assist them with their view in the monitor and how they can adjust the camera to see the closest cone and the safe distance to the farthest cone.

### Mirror and Back-Up Camera Proper Adjustment Exercise

Cones placed horizontally are 4 feet (1.22 meters) apart beginning with the center cone working across 16 feet.





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Visit [SWANA.org/safety](https://www.swana.org/safety) for more backing tips, and additional safety information.

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