

# Risk Control Bulletin

## Truck Backing Basics

### When You Need Eyes in the Back of Your Head

RISK CONTROL



#### Whenever Possible Use a Spotter

When you learned to drive, one of the most difficult tasks was making the car go in reverse. You had to twist your head uncomfortably. It was impossible to steer straight, and you had blind spots in every direction.

Today you're a professional, but the task of backing your vehicle may still be intimidating. In fact, it's harder than it was because you now have to do it with a machine that's far more unwieldy than a car and has 10 times as many blind spots.

Some people say the best advice about backing up is to avoid doing it whenever you can. That's true – especially when you're pulling a combination rig. But you can't always avoid it. Know how to do it right and it will make your job easier and safer.

#### Some Basics

It's best to have a spotter outside the truck. If not, you have to be your own spotter. It means getting out of the truck to make sure you know how much clearance you have at all points: in the back, on both sides and on top.

#### When a Spotter is Unavailable, Check the Situation Carefully

Walk around the area where you plan to park your rig and scope out the situation before you start. Estimate clearances all around. Then check them again by getting out of the truck at least once after you have backed more than halfway into the parking space.

Back from the left side if you can. That's your "seeing side." You can see a lot more from there than you can on the blind side. Check both sides frequently in your mirrors.

#### Go Slowly

Creep into place. If it's not going right, pull forward and take another look, then try again.

Be aware of all hazards and obstacles, including people who may walk through the area. Plan your maneuver so you'll interfere with traffic as little as possible.

Make absolutely sure you've got clearance for the top of your rig. Watch for overhangs that might be in its way.

#### Remember the "S" curve

With a straight truck, you turn the wheel in the direction you want the rear to go. It's a lot like backing a car, except your truck is bigger.

With a combination rig, it's a different story. The tractor has to follow an "S" curve. First you turn the front in the opposite direction of where you want the rear end to go. Then you straighten out and follow in the same direction as your trailer.

Don't over steer. Back out of traffic, not into. And if you leave your trailer at the dock, be sure to chock its wheels.

#### Make Your Job Easier

Master the techniques of backing your vehicle into a loading dock or other tight spot and you will have acquired one of the most important skills that any professional driver ever needs to have. You'll make your job a lot easier.