

Tailgate Meeting Guide: Preventing Reversing Incidents

Incidents that occur while a vehicle is being operated in reverse are common and costly. This guide will help you lead discussions about preventing these incidents and help drivers develop better backing skills.

Explain the facts

- On average over the last 16 years, one worker has been killed each year in BC in reversing incident. *
- Reversing incidents are often caused by a driver who “looked but did not see” something crucial. Blind spots, distractions, rushing, complacency, and fatigue are common contributing factors.
- When there’s a reversing collision, the *Motor Vehicle Act* (S. 193) holds the reversing driver responsible.

Apply the Hierarchy of Controls - Reduce the need to reverse

Administrative controls (e.g. safe driving policies) and personal protective equipment don’t safeguard employees when a reversing error occurs. A far better approach is to *eliminate* reversing risks altogether. That means looking for and finding ways to reduce how often vehicles are reversed. Try this exercise.

Have drivers keep track of where and how often they reverse their vehicles. In the meeting, discuss their findings and see if the group can identify ways to eliminate some of those reversing events. Can they take advantage of pull-through parking? Can physical barriers be installed to separate people and traffic? If you can’t eliminate risks, can you use engineered controls (e.g., convex mirrors, reversing alarms) to reduce risks?

Learn and use correct backing practices

1. Get out and look. Walk around your vehicle. Check the area for people and vehicles that could enter your reversing path. If you see anything that might pose a risk, find a solution.
2. Eliminate distractions (e.g. turn off the radio) so you can focus on reversing.
3. Look in your rear-view mirror and side mirrors. Use the back-up camera if the vehicle has one.
4. Shift your seating position to look through the rear window. Turn your body, placing your right arm on the back of the passenger seat and your left hand at the top of the steering wheel. Bracing your body this way allows you to turn your head further over your shoulder, giving you a wider field of view.
5. Looking over your right shoulder, plan your route and mentally “rehearse” the plan.
6. Scan all three mirrors again. Looking behind you, begin reversing slowly.
7. Pause often to check mirrors and back-up camera, and the front of your vehicle as it swings around.



Seating Position When Reversing

Reversing Tips

- If your vehicle has a back-up sensor, listen to it. Ensure you understand how the beeping frequency relates to the distance between your vehicle and obstacles. However, don't rely solely on these tools because they don't provide the complete picture.
- Take advantage of help if it's available. Ask a spotter to guide you and keep others out of your reversing path. Make sure the driver and spotter both know the procedure, the best location for spotter to stand, and what the hand signals mean.

Try these activities

- Park a work vehicle in an open parking lot. Have a driver place a safety cone behind the vehicle at the closest point they *think* they will be able to see it using the vehicle mirrors. Usually, they will place the cone far too close. Have someone else place another cone at the nearest location behind the vehicle where the driver can *actually* see it using the mirrors. Have the driver get out and measure the difference.
- Set out a few cones in a parking lot and have drivers practice backing vehicles between the cones.
- Ask if any employees have experienced a reversing incident or near miss. Ask them to explain the circumstances and what they might have done differently to avoid the incident.
- If your workplace has locations where reversing incidents or near misses have happened, go to those sites with the crew. Look at the layout, observe what's going on, and ask the crew to suggest how those sites could be rearranged or what could be done to reduce risks.
- Get managers, supervisors, and dispatchers involved in finding solutions. Have them attend a meeting to discuss how to plan and adjust routes to reduce reversing frequency and risks.

Resources for your tailgate meeting

1. [Reversing Safely in the Workplace](#) - video; planning for sites and locations
2. [SafetyFirst Preventing Backing Collisions](#) - PowerPoint presentation
3. [Correctly adjusting your mirrors](#) - instructions and downloadable graphic
4. [Ground Guiding and Spotting](#) - video from SafetyDriven
5. [Backing Up](#) - IHSa information resource

* WorkSafeBC 2003 - 2018

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