

SKID STEER LOADERS

(For assistance, please contact EHS at (402) 472-4925, or visit our web site at <http://ehs.unl.edu/>)

Skid steer loaders are useful but dangerous pieces of equipment. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) found a number of fatalities associated with skid steer loader use, most often attributable to:

- Working or standing under a raised loader bucket
- Leaning out of the operator's compartment into the path of the moving lift arms
- Improper entering or exiting
- Rollovers

To reduce the potential for the above types of accidents, the following safety features are critical: liftarm supports, interlocked controls, seat belts, rollover protective structures (ROPS), and side screens. Equipment that lacks the above operable safety features is not appropriate for use by UNL employees.

General Safety

- Operators should be trained by a knowledgeable person prior to operating a skid steer loader. This should include reading/understanding the owner's manual, operational safety, and demonstration of safe operation under anticipated conditions (e.g., terrain, load, etc.).
- Never by-pass or disable the safety devices.
- Before operating, clear the work area of by-standers and acquaint yourself with surrounding hazards (e.g., electrical lines, low clearance, uneven terrain, ramp edges, etc.).
- Consult EHS to determine if hearing protective devices are warranted while operating the equipment.

Entry

- Do not operate if fatigued, injured, or while taking medications or other substances that may impede your ability to operate the equipment safely.
- Conduct a pre-operation safety check before entering to verify the integrity of safety devices, tires, structural components, and engine (e.g., no leaks, adequate fuel, etc.).
- Clear mud, ice, snow, and other debris from the controls, operator's compartment, and entry/exit footholds.
- Enter the equipment only when the bucket or other attachments are on the ground, or are locked in place with lift arm supports.
- Face the seat and keep a three point contact with the hand holds and steps.
- DO NOT use the operating controls for handholds or steps.
- Always wear the seatbelt when operating the equipment.

Operation

- Immediately after starting the engine, verify the working nature of the controls, brakes, horn, and alarms.
- Operate the loader from the operator compartment, never from the outside.
- Keep arms, legs, and head inside the cab when operating the loader.
- Avoid excessive speeds.
- Operate the equipment on stable surfaces. When possible, load, unload, and turn the equipment around on level ground.
- For maximum stability, travel and turn equipment when the bucket is in the lowest position possible.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's specified load limit. Take care to evenly distribute the load. In some cases, it may be necessary to secure the load to prevent falling or shifting.
- Avoid traveling across slopes and hills; if absolutely necessary, travel straight up or down with the heavy end of the machine pointed uphill.
- Always look in the direction of travel.
- Never allow passengers in the operator compartment or bucket of the skid steer loader.
- Never allow a person to position themselves under or near the bucket or frame while the skid steer loader is in operation.

Exit

- Before leaving the operator's seat, set the bucket on the ground, set the parking brake, and turn off the engine.
- Never work around the equipment when the bucket or fork attachment is raised unless it is supported and the brakes are set, and the key is removed from the ignition. Use lift arm supports when they are present on the equipment. If no supports are present, contact the equipment dealer or manufacturer for help in determining proper support procedures.
- Chock the wheels, if necessary.

Maintenance

- Maintain equipment in good operating condition with all safety devices functioning properly. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for maintenance of the equipment.
- Do not service the equipment when the engine is running unless directed to do so by the operator's manual, and then only while observing stated safety precautions/procedures.
- Observe safe refueling procedures.

References

- DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 98-117, Preventing Injuries and Deaths from Skid Steer Loaders
- K-State Research and Extension, Skid Steer Loader Safety for the Landscaping and Horticulture Services Industry