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Car and Tractor Trailer Accidents

Truck Accident Prevention: Garbage truck backing over woman may be an accident but it is preventable.

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Truck backing over pedestrian woman is preventable.

Today I'm going to revisit accidents in which a pedestrian is backed over by a truck or other vehicle while the driver is attempting to back to the rear. A backing up maneuver.

These are tragic accidents. But the tragedy aside we need to learn from them to prevent future accidents from happening. If the rules are followed these types of accident are preventable. Pedestrians don't stand a chance when confronted suddenly with an approaching vehicle. That's not a statement that shouldn't cause an epiphany its simply reality.

Accidents are about an assessment of fault. Who did what and when did they do it? What should they have done differently and why? Answer those questions and you pave the way to what the civil justice system is all about. Feelings aside they have nothing to do with assessment of fault. The cold hard facts of life include that vehicles are instruments of death. Put a rushed or distracted person behind the wheel and I'll show you a driver at fault. Just drive down the road and watch the number of people texting or with a cell phone glued to their ear looking around wondering who is watching how important they appear while talking on the phone.

Corporate America is trimmed to the bone. They are squeezing more and more out of less and less. And that means fewer workers have to do more work in less time. In the case of the garbage truck backing over the woman it's pretty predictable and preventable.

First it's predictable because it's not rocket science to expect workers to be downtown on the sidewalks, walkways and alleys of busy Des Moines. Deliver trucks, garbage trucks and the like know they have to contend with pedestrian traffic.

And backing over pedestrians is preventable. If the driver is intending to back up and can't see behind they simply need to rely on a spotter. Most vehicles are required to use a rear-audible-warning device that emits a beeping sound as the truck is engaged to back up. If the warning device isn't working then the truck isn't suppose to be put into use until it's fixed. It's that simple. If the driver is unable to see to the rear then a spotter is used.

This type of accident is far too common than one might think. The first example comes about on October 27, 2004. In that case we researched this issue involving a situation in Oceola, Clarke County, Iowa. The vehicle was a shag truck with a disconnected rear-warning-device. The driver couldn't see and simply backed up over a fellow security guard worker. Luckily the woman didn't die. She is today a living example of a miracle. In spite of my grouchiness we remain friends.

The second example came up as a news item by the Gazetteonline.com from Cedar Rapids and it [caught my attention on June 7, 2008](#). In that case a Garnavillo woman working at a sand company was backed over by an end loader. She off course died at the scene. You might wonder how this can happen and how to prevent it from happening to you or your loved one. OSHA has rules that apply to certain industries that are designed to reduce the number of fatalities from backing over someone at a work site. There is no indication of what time the shift began or what the worker was doing at the time she was backed over. Workers on work sites are busy with individual duties and can't have eyes in the back of their head. Spotters can help avoid these mishaps along with auditory rear warning devices.

In the third example a [4-year-old child was backed over in Gowrie](#) and it was reported in the Des Moines Register on October 7, 2008. In that instance the driver of a Ford pickup truck didn't see the child as they were backing out of the driveway, continued and the child was killed.

In the latest case a [Des Moines woman died of massive head and leg injuries on November 7, 2008 when a garbage truck backed over her](#) while in an alley to the rear of the Aviva USA Insurance Company building. That building is close to the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Park Street, downtown Des Moines.

These are all sad cases and our heart goes out to the survivors and the drivers who live with the pain but according to experts these accidents are preventable.

Rear warning devices have to work, shouldn't be plugged up or covered or disconnected. They should be appropriately loud and distinct enough for the work zone. If the vehicle was manufactured with a rear warning device it can not be disconnected without a written consent of the manufacturer. If the rear alarm doesn't work the vehicle shouldn't be used until it's repaired. [OSHA has specific rules](#) based on the

industry and the history of past accidents.

"This is in response to your May 12 letter requesting compliance determinations for your "Radar Backup Alarm System 202" as it relates to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard 29 CFR 1926.601(b)(4)(i). That provision addresses reverse signal alarms for motor vehicles."

From 1990 to Jan. 2003 there were 9 child deaths out of 42 children involved in backing up incidents.

Research has proven that rear warning devices work. There is also research that discusses the overuse of these devices and competing noises and how those noises interfere with a pedestrian's perception of imminent danger. That simply means drivers can not and company's should not require drivers to rely solely on rear warning devices when rushed and in a hurry to complete a route.

One company, The Strattus Group in its Backing Accident Prevention instructions cites numbers of accidents and costs associated with this type of accident and they contend **"All backing accidents are preventable!!!!."**

"There are over three million rear-end accidents (backing accidents) each year in the USA, over four billion dollars spent on repairs and over one thousand lost lives! Studies have shown that 60% of collisions in the transportation field involve backing / parking. While these low speed collisions rarely produce injuries, they do occur frequently, costing you and your insurance company money. Fleet safety and consumer back up accident prevention devices (reverse car parking aid) are a necessary and low cost solution.

Backing accidents can be significantly reduced by warning commercial and consumer drivers of eminent danger saving lives, property and money.

All backing accidents are preventable!!!!

Stratus back-up Rear View System (Vehicle Driver Alert System), safety collision avoidance / parking device is unique. Commercial fleets like Pepsi and Budweiser understand the safety issues associated with vehicular mishaps. Commercial fleets understand that 60 - 80% of the their accidents involve backing. Most backing accidents are not accidental, with the proper equipment and training most can be avoided. The first choice in Backup Warning System is Stratus by The Stratus Group. Our collision avoidance system (reverse car parking aid) is simply the very best on the market and we understand that making distribution opportunities available is essential to our continuing development and marketing.

Our Backup parking alarm system far out performs other backing radar and safety parking systems on the market. A digital display and audible alert show distance in feet and inches. Our back-up sensor collision avoidance system is the best on the market. The Stratus reverse warning device is installed on all Hummer vehicles sold in Broward County area, commercial and consumer vehicles ford -mercury - excursion -explorer -Lincoln Chevy Mercedes etc. Stratus backup alarm warning system is the absolute best on the market. No radar reverse parking assist product even comes close. If you are searching for a backing accident prevention, reversing or echolocation avoidance system for you car, you have found the best product on the market"

Advice for pedestrians

People on brakes to have a smoke need to be especially careful watching, listening and keeping their head on a swivel.

Advice for the landlord

Watch where you place the dumpster keeping it away from places where workers congregate to smoke or wait for rides. If the dumpster area is limited place signs advising pedestrians and drivers alike.

Advice for the truck driver and company

The company should not be asking drivers to do more than they can safely perform. The drivers should use spotters and make sure the rear warning devices are working before taking the truck out of the yard. Use spotters when necessary.

Perhaps these tragedy's can be avoided or at least reduced.

RESOURCES

Do Motor Vehicle Back-Up Warning Devices Protect Young Children?, by Sapient, et al.

OSHA 29 CFR 1926.601(b)(4)(i)

Labels: 29 CFR 1926.601, audible, backing up, device, negligence, OSHA, rear, trucks, warning

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