#### Refuse Haulers: Backing Basics

Backing accidents generally do not result in severe injury or property damage, they do represent the most frequent type of vehicle accidents in refuse collection operations.

**General rules are as follows:**

Avoid backing if at all possible. It is preferable to go around the block if a backup can be avoided

Size up the situation before backing. Walk around the vehicle to examine the area and look for hazardous situations

Check the surface. Note depressions, bumps, obstacles and any persons who might come into the line of travel

Check top clearances. Note how wide the vehicle is in relationship to the size of the space being backed into

After analyzing the situation, begin the backing maneuver immediately before the situation has a chance to change

Activate 4-way flashers

**The primary considerations in backing:**

1. The initial position, the safest position is one that permits direct view by the driver, and starts as close as possible to the final position to minimize the distance the truck must back.

2. Every attempt should be made to position the truck so that leaving the loading or unloading site will be done toward the flow of traffic. Although it cannot be avoided in all cases, backing into the traffic flow must be avoided if at all possible.

3. Back slowly at an even rate (about 3 miles per hour). Start and stop in an even and smooth motion. Ease up to loading docks, transfer station, compactors or the final backing destination using a "feather touch" on the accelerator.

4. Repeatedly check both side mirrors as the backing maneuver progresses.

5. Look for persons or objects that may come into the line of travel. Stop the vehicle immediately and clear the rear of the truck before proceeding.

6. Be absolutely sure of the distance to go to the stop point. Use a fixed point on the left side of the vehicle against some external object such as a pole; point on the ground or on an adjacent vehicle that would be an indication of the approximate stopping position. Use a reliable spotter whenever possible.

7. Review standard hand signals with the spotter prior to commencing the maneuver.

8. The spotter is to stand in the position to clearly see both the driver and the area to the rear of the vehicle as well as any "blind" spots.

9. If the spotter must change positions which requires moving from one side of the truck to the other or walking with the spotter's back to the truck, stop the truck, reposition the spotter then resume the maneuver.

10. If visual contact with the spotter is lost during the maneuver, stop immediately and relocate the spotter.

11. Begin backing maneuvers only after all crew have dismounted from riding steps and are well clear of the vehicle and its line of travel.

12. Adhere to the signaling system agreed to if the unit is equipped with a crew buzzer.

13. Be sure of the position of all crew before moving the vehicle. The vehicle is to be at a complete stop before crew mount or dismount riding steps.

14. If the operator observes any unsafe act or technique, the operator is to immediately stop and counsel the crew on proper procedures.

15. When stopping for collection activities, the refuse vehicle is to be positioned so that the activities of the crew are easily visible to other vehicles, particularly near intersections or adjacent to lines of parked vehicles.

16. Crew shall ride only on approved and properly maintained riding steps.

The following situations illustrate several scenarios involving backing maneuvers and use of spotters. The individual circumstances to a great extent dictate the exact procedures to be used. These examples attempt to illustrate the principles of using the shortest backing distance possible, protecting the blind spot of the truck, and keeping the spotter out of the direct line of movement of the vehicle.

***Situation 1:***

**Backing At The Landfill Or Transfer Station**

The ideal backing situation for a straight truck: the truck driver approaches the loading or unloading area such as in the landfill, keeping the area to be backed into on the left side of the vehicle. The truck should be stopped and the area to the rear of the vehicle checked before commencing the maneuver. If the vehicle is located correctly, the driver will have already cleared the entire area during the approach maneuver and will have the best view of the left and rear of the truck through the rear view mirror. If a spotter is available, the crew person leaves the truck and takes up a position so as to be clear of the turning radius. As the truck moves, the spotter walks to the right rear of the vehicle so that he/she can maintain visual contact with the driver through the right side rear view mirror and be able to walk (facing forward) as the truck backs. As the truck backs, the spotter walks alongside the right rear keeping clear of the turning radius, signaling the driver until the stopping point is reached.

***Situation 2:***

**Backing a Transfer Trailer Or Combination Unit**

The driver cannot keep a direct view of the spotter from the right side of the cab. So, after checking the right side for clearance, the spotter must move to the left rear of the vehicle near the unloading point. In this manner, as a cab turns relative to the trailer, the spotter will be in direct view of the blind area on the right side of the trailer throughout the maneuver. The spotter may move closer to the stop point, but remains clear of the line of movement.

**Considerations For Multiple Spotters**

Where more than two crewmembers are available both may function as spotters in assisting the driver with backing the truck. Great care should be taken; however, to keep both employees clear of the line of travel. If either spotter loses visual contact with the driver, the truck is to be stopped immediately and the spotters relocated.

In situation 3, 4, 5 the first crewmember would hold traffic at a stop while the second crewmember concentrates on assisting the driver in the backing maneuver.

When working with multiple spotters, great care should be taken not to give the driver too many situation or individuals to watch, so as to distract from the safe operation of the truck. The driver should continually assess the safety of the spotters, and use helpers only as can be done without creating a hazardous condition.

***Situation 3:***

**Backing From a Street Into A Pickup Area (Wide Access)**

This involves a less than ideal backing situation, which frequently occurs in refuse collection operations. This situation is typical of a rear loader having to back into an alley for a pick-up.

When working alone, the driver should stop the vehicle so that the backup area is clearly visible from the right side of the vehicle. The driver should check to see that the area to the rear of the truck is clear of approaching vehicles to permit sufficient time for the backing maneuver. If not, the driver should get out of the cab and stop the following traffic and persuade the driver to remain stopped until the backing maneuver is completed. Then pull forward, keeping the area to be backed into clearly visible in the right side rear view mirror, then immediately back out of the line of traffic.

If the spotter is used, this person should stop any following traffic, then move so as to have a safe position to watch the blind side of the truck as it begins to back up, while remaining clear of the line of travel. Once the truck has passed, the spotter should then cross the front of the truck to the right rear and then proceed down the right side to the stopping point as in Situation 1.

***Situation 4:***

**Backing Into a Pickup Area (Narrow Access)**

Situation 4 illustrates the same set-up as in Situation 3 except that the access area is too narrow to allow the spotter to walk down the right side of the vehicle. In this case, once the truck has backed clear of the traffic lane, the truck should stop and the spotter walk to a protected position near the end of the backing maneuver. The spotter should remain still as the vehicle backs, signaling the driver who keeps the spotter visible in the left-hand mirror. In this way the spotter can also watch the rear and right side of the vehicle for much of the maneuver. *Should the spotter for any reason not be visible to the driver at any point in this maneuver, the vehicle is to be stopped immediately and the spotter relocated.*

***Situation 5:***

**Backing Into A Traffic Lane (With Spotters)**

After the pickup is made, the driver activates the 4-way flasher and pulls to the left side of the alleyway to give the spotter a clear view and walking area on the right side of the truck. The driver clears the left of the truck through the rear view mirrors, and the spotter walks along with the unit as it backs, remaining clearly in view of the driver. When the rear of the truck approaches the intersection, the driver stops and the spotter then moves so as to be visible to both oncoming vehicles and to the refuse truck driver, either directly or through the right side mirror. The spotter first stops oncoming traffic, then signals the truck to begin the backing maneuver. The driver swings wide enough to allow the spotter a safe standing area to the right side and the spotter moves to remain clear of the line of travel.

The truck should be backed into the traffic lane only as far as is necessary to clear the front of the cab and turning radius. The spotter will quickly re-enter the cab or mount the right side-riding step and the truck will then pull forward into the traffic lane.

***Situation 6:***

**Backing Into A Traffic Lane (Driver Only)**

This illustration shows the same maneuver, where a driver is working alone. The driver backs so that a clear view of oncoming traffic is available. The driver should stop the truck so as not to obstruct the traffic lane, but to allow the rear of the vehicle, with the 4-way flashers activated, to be visible to oncoming motorists. The truck should remain stopped until sufficient traffic clearance permits the maneuver to be completed. If traffic is heavy, or the driver does not have a clear view of the traffic lane, he or she should leave the cab and clear the traffic lane. If necessary, the driver signals oncoming traffic to stop and instructs those motorists to remain stationary until the maneuver is completed. The driver then quickly re-enters the cab and backs into the traffic lane keeping the truck as close to the curb as possible. This gives any motorist approaching unexpectedly as much maneuvering room on the left side of the truck as possible. The driver then immediately pulls forward into the lane of traffic and proceeds.

## Driving With A Collection Crew

Review crew procedures and responsibilities with any new or inexperienced crew members.

Crews are to be allowed on riding steps only while moving forward during actual collection and loading of refuse.

Crew should be directed inside the cab when speed exceeds ten MPH or when the next stop is more than two tenths of a mile. ANSI Standard.

Crew is to remain inside the cab during landfill operations.

Be constantly alert for hazard such as branches, projections, parked vehicle, etc. which may pose a hazard to crew riding on steps.

Steer well clear of projection hazard (alert crew to the presence of hazard by sounding horn).

When engaged in collection activities, always remain to the farthest right lane as consistent with the safety of the crew.