Alert: Operating Construction Equipment in Reverse

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Hazard Summary:

A construction worker was killed while working behind a piece of road building equipment operating in the reverse direction. A Ministry of Labour investigation found the worker had gone behind the equipment without the knowledge of the equipment operator. This was contrary to the work practice previously established between the heavy equipment operator and the engineering technician taking grade on the road construction project.

Required Action:

Whenever heavy construction equipment is being used, including road building equipment, workers working nearby must be sure to establish eye contact with the equipment operator.

Section 104 of O. Reg. 213/91, Regulations for Construction Projects requires that every project be planned and organized so that vehicles, machines and equipment are not operated in reverse or are operated in reverse as little as possible. Where this is not feasible the constructor/employer shall ensure that no vehicle, machine or equipment, crane or similar hoisting device, shovel, backhoe or similar excavating machine shall be operated unless the operator is assisted by a signaller,

(1) where the operator's view of the intended path of travel or any part of its travel is obstructed;

or

(2) where it is in a location in which a person may be endangered by its intended path of travel.

Section 104 (5) states that the operator and the signaller shall jointly establish the procedures by which the signaller assists the operator and both shall follow those procedures.

Section 106 outlines the duties of a signaller including the direction not to perform other work while acting as the signaller. The employer shall also ensure the signaller has received adequate oral and written training in his or her duties as a signaller and is wearing adequate personal protective equipment, including a garment fluorescent blaze or international orange in colour. A review of the training needs of the workers required to perform the work should also occur.

Pre-job meetings should occur to review the scope of work, and safety hazards associated with the type of work that is to be performed.
Clear and precise written instructions should be given to all workers and equipment operators regarding the hazards associated with working near or adjacent to heavy equipment and when the use of a signaller is required for the safe operation of the equipment.

This Ministry of Labour Alert has no legal effect and does not constitute and is not a substitute for legal advice. If you require specific assistance with respect to the interpretation of a legislative provision and its potential application to you please contact your legal counsel.

Remember that while complying with occupational health and safety laws, you are also required to comply with applicable environmental laws.

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