



SKID STEER OPERATION



Why This Matters

Skid steers are powerful machines commonly used in construction, landscaping, agriculture, and material handling. Their compact size and maneuverability create unique hazards, including:

- Rollovers
- Crushing and pinning incidents
- Struck-by accidents
- Falls during entry and exit
- Contact with utilities or overhead hazards

Before Operating

Conduct a Pre-Use Inspection

Check:

- Tires or tracks for damage
- Hydraulic hoses and fittings for leaks
- Fluid levels
- Safety devices and alarms
- Seat belt and restraint bar
- Attachment pins and connections

Do not operate equipment with known defects.

Review the Work Area

- Identify overhead power lines.
- Locate underground utilities before digging.
- Remove debris and obstacles.
- Be aware of pedestrians and other equipment.

Safe Operating Practices

Enter and Exit Correctly

- Use three points of contact.
- Face the machine when climbing in or out.
- Keep steps and handholds clean.

Use Seat Belt and Restraint System

- Always wear the seat belt.
- Lower the restraint bar before operating.
- Never bypass safety devices.

Operate at Safe Speeds

- Travel at speeds appropriate for conditions.
- Slow down on rough or uneven terrain.
- Avoid sudden starts, stops, and turns.

Keep the Load Low

- Carry loads as low as practical while traveling.
- Raise the bucket only when necessary.
- Avoid traveling with elevated loads.

Watch for People

- Maintain awareness of workers nearby.
- Use a spotter when visibility is limited.
- Never allow riders on the machine or attachments.

Prevent Rollovers

- Travel straight up and down slopes when possible.
- Keep heavy loads uphill.
- Avoid operating on slopes that exceed the manufacturer recommendations.
- Make turns slowly and carefully.
- Stay away from edges, trenches, and embankments.

Attachment Safety

- Ensure attachments are properly secured.
- Verify hydraulic connections are locked and leak-free.
- Use attachments only for their intended purpose.
- Follow manufacturer's operating instructions.

Shutdown Procedures

1. Park on a level surface.
2. Lower the bucket or attachment to the ground.
3. Set the parking brake.
4. Shut off the engine.
5. Remove the key if leaving the machine unattended.

Discussion Questions

1. What hazards are present in your current work area?
2. What should you do if a safety device is not functioning properly?
3. Why is it important to keep loads low while traveling?
4. When should a spotter be used?

Key Takeaway

Most skid steer incidents occur due to operator error, poor visibility, speeding, or bypassing safety systems. Inspect the machine, wear your seat belt, keep loads low, and stay aware of your surroundings every time you operate a skid steer.

For more safety tips and courses, visit ndsc.org

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