

DUMP TRUCK SAFETY...

OPERATING AND SPOTTING FOR A TRUCK

COURSE OUTLINE

- **Safety always begins with preparation, and operating dump trucks is no exception.**
 - Making sure you, your jobsite and your truck are prepared beforehand is the best way to keep everyone safe.
- **First, you need to be mentally as well as physically ready to operate such a heavy piece of equipment.**
 - This means making sure you get enough sleep, food, and water beforehand.
 - If you're fatigued or dehydrated, the likelihood that you'll make a mistake while operating any equipment increases significantly.
- **The same thing can happen if you're not mentally "balanced".**
 - If you're feeling angry, sad, or just distracted, you should take time to "cool down and focus" before you operate a dump truck.
- **Once you are ready to go, you should read and understand everything in the dump truck's operator's manual.**
 - It should be in the machine at all times.
- **You can then begin your "pre-shift inspection," to confirm that all of the dump truck's parts are working correctly.**
- **First, you should check out anything that you can look at when the motor is turned off. This includes...**
 - Fluid and oil levels.
 - Potential leaks in the hydraulic cylinders.
 - Loose, worn or damaged parts in the cab, on the dump body or tires.
 - You should also make sure that any labels inside the cab are undamaged and legible.
- **Remember to wear protective equipment.**
 - Gloves are especially important when you're checking for hydraulic leaks.
- **Never use your hands to look for leaks within hydraulic cylinders.**

- Instead, use the “cardboard test”, running a piece of cardboard along the cylinder to see if it comes back wet or dry.
- **Then, with the motor on, verify that your controls are working correctly.**
 - Exercise them one at a time and make sure you can lift, tilt, and turn your dump body smoothly.
- **Next check that your lights and signals all turn on and can be seen clearly.**
 - You may need another worker to help you with this.
 - Don’t forget to make sure your back-up alarm is working.
- **Last, check your parking brake by putting your truck in “park” and trying to move forward or backward.**
- **If any part of the dump truck fails your inspection, do not use it.**
 - Notify your supervisor immediately and tag it “OUT OF SERVICE”.
- **If your truck passes inspection, you can move on to surveying the site you’ll be working on. Look around the general area and note any...**
 - Debris.
 - Potholes.
 - Structures.
 - Overhead obstructions.
 - Marked underground utilities.
 - Vehicles, pedestrians, or other workers in the area.
- **Once you’re familiar with your jobsite and feel that you and the dump truck are ready to go, you can get to work.**
- **Dump trucks can move tons of material many miles.**
 - But that power comes with a lot of responsibility.
- **Operating a dump truck incorrectly can lead to serious, and sometimes fatal, accidents.**
 - That’s why it’s important to know how to safely drive and control one.
- **Because dump trucks are so large, they can be difficult to mount.**
 - If you rush, you might slip and fall.
 - Falling from that height can cause serious injuries.
- **So take your time and maintain “three points of contact”.**

- At least two hands and a foot or two feet and a hand, on the machine at all times.
- **Once you have a good grip, pull yourself up and slowly rotate your body into the cab.**
 - Never use controls as step stools or handles.
- **Adjust your seat so that you can comfortably reach the controls.**
 - If you're not comfortable, it could very well lead to some type of ergonomic injury.
- **Don't forget to fasten your seatbelt.**
 - In the event of a collision or tipover, it could save your life.
- **After you settle into the cab and make any necessary adjustments, your truck is ready to be loaded.**
 - In some cases, another worker will load your truck for you.
- **Other times, you'll be responsible for loading it yourself.**
 - You'll likely do this with another piece of heavy equipment such as a backhoe or excavator.
- **To load a dump truck, you need to first park it on level ground.**
 - You can then start putting your materials in the truck's bed.
- **You should start at the center of the bed and work your way outward, using "side-to-side" motions.**
 - This will help you keep the load evenly distributed.
 - Remember to keep the truck's capacity in mind.
- **Once your truck is loaded, return to its cab and drive it to its destination slowly and deliberately.**
 - Back your truck up to the dump site and carefully raise the bed.
 - Remember to check for people and other obstructions as you go.
- **If it's possible, let the load empty completely before moving again.**
 - But in some cases, you'll need to cautiously inch forward as your truck unloads.
- **When you're unloading compact or wet materials, they can sometimes stick to the bed.**

- While some drivers try to dislodge the materials by “jerking” the truck forward, this really isn’t safe.
- **Sudden movements can jeopardize a dump truck’s stability.**
 - Instead, remove any stuck materials by hand.
 - When you’re done unloading, lower the dump body so it is level with the cab again before driving away.
- **If you drive a dump truck on the road, you should keep a tarp over your load to prevent material from falling onto following vehicles.**
 - Many locales require it.
 - And always adhere to all traffic laws.
- **You may also want to put a “Slow Moving Vehicle” emblem on the back of your truck to let other traffic know you’ll be moving at your own speed.**
- **When you are ready to “call it a day”, it’s important to park and shut down your dump truck safely.**
 - First, find an open, level place.
 - You want to avoid parking anywhere that will block fire hydrants, exits or entrances, or emergency equipment routes.
- **Then, release the gas pedal, depress the brake and put the transmission in neutral.**
 - Next, set the parking brake and let the engine continue to run for a few minutes to allow the truck to cool down.
- **Then turn off the truck and dismount, using the process you did to get on, but in reverse.**
 - Keep both hands and a foot or both feet and a hand on the machine at all times.
 - Take your time, and be especially careful if the machine has gotten muddy or slippery.
- **Dump trucks aren’t just potentially dangerous for the person operating them.**
 - They can hurt people on the ground, too... especially “spotters”.
- **When operators have limited visibility, they will sometimes use a “spotter”.**
 - It’s the spotter’s responsibility to safely guide the operator where they need to go.

- **If you're the "spotter", before the operator mounts the dump truck you should have an agreed-upon "action plan".**
- **Be sure to discuss...**
 - Where the truck's blind spots are.
 - Any hazards in the area.
 - The planned movement and positioning of the dump truck.
 - The hand signals you're going to use.
- **Common hand signals that spotters use include...**
 - "Stop".
 - "Continue" ("Keep Moving").
 - "Move Right".
 - "Move Left".
 - "Slow Down".
- **To signal "Stop", most spotters will hold up one or both hands with closed fists, or with an open palm held forward.**
 - So you need to discuss which version of the signal you're going to use with the operator.
- **To signal the operator to "Keep Moving", you should...**
 - Raise your arm with a bent elbow.
 - Then wave the top part of the arm in a motion away from the vehicle.
- **In instances where the dump truck won't be moving in a straight line, you'll have to know the "Move Right" and "Move Left" hand signals.**
 - The most common way to do this is to hold your arm out straight, with a finger pointing in the direction the operator should move.
 - Then, use the other hand to signal that they should "Keep Moving".
- **To help prepare the operator to stop smoothly, you will need a motion that tells them to "Slow Down".**
 - Here, you hold one arm out and move your hand up and down while keeping your palm face down.
- **Everyone should know the universal "Emergency Stop" signal.**
 - Repeatedly pointing both hands toward your chest to form an "X", then away from you, and back in again.
- **When you're acting as a spotter, you need to wear high-visibility clothing.**

- You should also stay out of the dump truck’s “blind spots”.
 - Don’t position yourself directly behind or in front of it, either.
- **Keep a safe distance away and stay in the operator’s line of sight.**
 - Watch your step as you’re moving.
 - If you’re so focused on the truck that you forget to look where you’re walking, you could trip on a rut or some debris.
- **It’s also critical that you pay attention to what’s going on around you.**
 - Construction sites are busy places, and if you allow your mind to wander it could have serious consequences for you and the dump truck driver.

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **Always do a pre-shift inspection to make sure your truck is safe to drive... every time you use it.**
- **Be careful when you are mounting or dismounting a dump truck. Use the “three-point contact” method and ease yourself in.**
- **Dump material on level ground whenever possible and move slowly. Always check around you before raising the dump body.**
- **If you’re on the road, follow all traffic laws. When you are loaded, use a “Slow Moving Vehicle” emblem to alert other vehicles that you will be moving at your own pace.**
- **When shutting down a dump truck, find level ground to park on. Make sure the body is lowered, then let the truck run for a few minutes before turning it off.**
- **If you’re a “spotter”, talk with the truck’s driver beforehand and agree on the hand signals that you’ll use.**
- **Now that you know how to prepare to drive a dump truck, how to operate it correctly and how to be a “spotter”, you can keep yourself and your coworkers safe... every time you get behind the wheel or “spot” for your site’s drivers.**