

Rear-end Accidents



Rear-end accidents are the greatest area of concern in the rental equipment industry. Rear-end accidents are the most common type of vehicle accident, and they are the costliest type of accident in terms of claims dollars paid. This type of accident tends to cause the most injury and damage, and the potential for a lawsuit and sizeable judgment are a very real concern whenever a rear-end accident occurs. Paragon's safety personnel analyzed a significant number of rear-end accidents involving rental equipment vehicles in an effort to find out why these accidents were occurring, and what can be done to prevent them in the future.

Why are Rear-end Accidents Occurring:

Plain and simple, the majority of rear-end accidents are related to following distance issues. While other primary factors such as cab distractions and assuming the actions of others played a role in rear-end accidents, an improper following distance was by far the biggest cause of loss. In general, a driver should be able to deal with a certain amount of cab distractions and avoid a rear-end accident if he or she is maintaining a proper following distance.

Secondary causes of rear-end accidents such as eyes-not-on-the-road and improper scanning ahead to avoid problems, relate directly back to the following distance issue. Drivers who are maintaining an adequate following distance have time to look at street signs or check their mirrors and still avoid rear-end accidents. Inadequate scanning ahead is often related to inadequate following distance. This is because the driver must be so focused on the vehicle in front, that there is no time to spot potential slowdowns or problems ahead.

Action Plan to Reduce Rear-end Accidents

- ❑ Establish a written company policy that requires employees who drive to maintain a four-second following distance under ideal driving conditions. Additional seconds should be added during inclement weather.
- ❑ Establish a written company policy that prohibits or greatly limits behind-the-wheel activities that can cause distraction. This includes activities such as texting, talking on the phone, eating, and reading paperwork.
- ❑ Establish a program of clandestine driver observations and/or supervisors riding with drivers to ensure that the safety policies are being followed.
- ❑ Have safety meetings for all current drivers and establish a training session for all new hires that will be driving to ensure that everyone is familiar with the company safety policies on following distance and behind-the-wheel distractions. Because of the importance of this issue, a safety meeting on this topic should be held annually.
- ❑ Have safety meetings for all current drivers and establish a training session for all new hires that will be driving to address proper long-distance scanning (spotting hazards and slowdowns in advance).
- ❑ Frequently remind employees who drive of the importance of maintaining a safe following distance, avoiding behind-the-wheel distractions, and doing proper long-distance scanning. This can be accomplished with: bulletin board messages, paycheck stuffers, and reminders during regular driver safety meetings or toolbox talks.
- ❑ Ensure that the brakes for all company vehicles are inspected and maintained on a regular basis.
- ❑ Make safety performance and compliance with safety policies part of an employee's performance review and part of any safety incentive or bonus programs.