

SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN

October 2021

LEAF COLLECTION BEST PRACTICES

Municipalities and public agencies collect leaves by a number of different means (leaf vacuums, front end loaders, bagged leaves, etc.) in an effort to improve safety and efficiency of the process. Any leaf collection operation exposes workers to hazards. Please consider the following tips to protect workers:

Department Leaders

- Perform a job hazard assessment on all leaf collection procedures and equipment.
- Thoroughly train all new employees prior to allowing them to operate any piece of equipment.
- Provide refresher training at the beginning of each leaf season for experienced workers. If the season is extended, provide additional training to reinforce safety procedures at regular intervals.
- Visit job sites and talk to workers. Reinforce desirable behaviors and consistently correct unsafe actions.

Drivers

- Follow manufacturers' recommendations when operating leaf vacuuming equipment. Conduct pre-trip inspections of the truck and vacuum unit per manufacturers' recommendations and department policy.
- Never allow workers to ride on the yoke of a trailer, or other areas not specifically designated for riders.
- Maintain visual contact of workers on foot when working close to the vehicle and while backing.
- Check both side mirrors frequently when backing.
- Use a reliable spotter positioned to see you and the blind spots behind your vehicle when backing.
- Stop the truck if the spotter must change positions and whenever visual contact is lost.
- Wear your seatbelt. Insist others in the cab wear theirs. Do not use your cell phone or otherwise become distracted. Stay alert of approaching motorists to possibly warn your crew members of danger.

Workers on foot

- Stay in mirrors or otherwise visible to driver. Remain clear of the rear of the vehicle when the backup lights or alarm is on.
- Be aware of crush zones. They include between moving vehicles and under raised loads.
- Use standard hand signals when acting as a spotter.
- Wear the required personal protective equipment. Remind co-workers to wear theirs.
- Stay alert to approaching motorists. Be prepared to warn co-workers. Have each other's backs.

The NJCE JIF website offers a variety of educational resources to supplement your employee training program. There are Shift Briefings (5 minute lesson plans) on Leaf Collection General Safety, Chainsaw General Safety, Leaf Vacuum-PPE Considerations, Crush Zones of Leaf Collection Operations and Hand Signals for Spotters. These Shift Briefings can be found by visiting the "Safety" section of the NJCE JIF website <https://njce.org/safety/shift-briefings/>.