



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 are 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 others' backs.

The MEL offers a variety of educational resources to supplement your employee training program. They can be found by visiting the MEL website, www.njmel.org, and selecting the MEL Safety Institute menu.

- Select **Safety Briefings** for 5-minute lesson plans on personal protective equipment, basic safety principles, avoiding crush zones, and hand signals for collecting leaves with vacuums, rear compactors, and front-end loaders.
- Choose **Safety Videos** to access the training videos, *Don't Get Caught in the Crush Zone* and *Stop and Think to Prevent Back Pain*. Members can also borrow videos from the MEL Media library. Click on **Order Conventional Videos** and select **MEL Media Catalog** to see the wide selection of general, landscape industry and heavy equipment safety videos that are available.

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.



Personal protective equipment for leaf vacuum operations must include:

- ANSI 107-2004 (or later) Class 2 or 3 high visibility apparel
- Hearing protection

The following is recommended depending on conditions:

- Work boots
- Tight-fitting protective eyewear
- Leather or similar work gloves
- Dust mask or N95 respirator. Workers who wear a filtering face piece respirator on a voluntary basis must acknowledge Appendix D in OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard.



Visibility of the workers on foot is a critical component for a safe operation. In the picture on the left, the worker is between the leaf vacuum and the truck and out of the driver's sight.

Drivers must maintain the proper distance from the curb to keep the vacuum hose operator as far as possible from the wheels of the truck or trailer.

Vacuum hose operators and workers on foot must be aware not to put themselves in a potential Crush Zone.



Leaf collection is a Mobile Work Zone. Establish traffic control according to the MUTCD. At a minimum, high intensity amber warning lights must be visible to motorists approaching from either direction.

Do not use directional arrows on 2-lane roadways.



Crush Zones are present in many leaf collection operations:

- Between and in front of moving vehicles
- Under raised loads and vehicle bodies