Heavy Equipment Safety Awareness

Introduction:

Heavy equipment has great value on worksites, including auto salvage and scrap yard facilities. However, equipment including forklifts, front-end loaders, cranes, dump trucks, crushers, and baler/loggers may be hazardous to operators and workers near the work area, because of the size, weight, and complex operating procedures. Safety becomes an important issue, and safety precautions should be taken. Operators and ground workers can be seriously injured or killed by moving parts if safety policies are not followed.

Discussion Points:

- What are the potential risks involving heavy equipment operation?
- What steps need to be taken to create a safe work environment?
- OSHA Standards and company policies
- Companies should develop and implement a Safety Program
- Training and the use of appropriate PPE

Discussion:

Only authorized employees should operate or work near heavy equipment or machinery. All workers should be trained in compliance with OSHA Standards, and company policies and rules. Heavy equipment operators are responsible for learning and understanding the potential hazards, and should be able to demonstrate their ability to operate equipment safely. Ground-based workers should be trained in safety practices on how to work safely around the equipment and stay clear to avoid an incident. Good communication is essential. One worker should be appointed as a “signal person” to communicate with the equipment operator. The “signal person” should learn and use standardized hand signals, along with the use of walkie-talkies for communication while onsite.

All workers are required to wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including eye and hearing protection, a hard hat, high visibility vest, safety boots, and gloves.

Equipment should be maintained in good condition. Before each use, the operator should walk around the equipment, and perform a safety check. If any problem is found, it should be repaired by authorized personnel before the equipment is used again. When mounting and dismounting equipment, a three-point technique should be used. Never jump on or off the equipment. Before starting the engine, make sure all windows are clean and all fixtures are properly adjusted, check the fire extinguisher, turn on all exterior lights, put on the seat belt, make sure all operating controls are in the neutral position, then start the engine. When operating the equipment, operate at speeds appropriate for the particular job and according to company protocol. Most serious injuries involving forklifts, cranes, and front-end loaders are rollovers. All operators are required to use Rollover Protection Structure (ROPS) and seat belts

to prevent the operator from being ejected or crushed during a rollover accident.

Safety precautions should be taken at every worksite. Each project should be well-prepared with a safety plan and guidelines implemented. It is every worker’s responsibility to understand the plan and follow the guidelines.

As always, stay safe out there!