Mobile Equipment “3 Foot Rule”

Clearance
A minimum of 3’ (foot) clearance should be maintained between pedestrians and mobile equipment. Where practical, care should be taken to determine aisle ways have sufficient width to provide 3’ clearance.

Approaching mobile equipment
Prior to permission being granted to approach an energized piece of mobile equipment within the minimum 3’ parameter, the pedestrian should make and confirm visual and audible contact with the operator indicating the intent to approach.

Once the intent to approach has been communicated, the equipment operator should do the following prior to permitting approach:
- Lower the load engaging apparatus to the ground regardless of whether or not a load is present, thereby eliminating all stored energy (pneumatic, hydraulic, etc.).
- Place all operating controls in neutral or park.
- Set the parking brake.
- Signal the pedestrian that it is safe to approach with an affirmative hand motion, waving the employee toward the equipment.

Releasing equipment back to an operating mode:
Once the pedestrian has concluded the required business within the 3’ perimeter, it is the responsibility of the pedestrian to clearly communicate their route of egress away from the equipment to the operator. The equipment operator should not raise the load engaging apparatus, remove the equipment controls from neutral, or release the parking brake until:
- The pedestrian has moved outside the 3’ perimeter and is clear of all pinch points including other pieces of mobile equipment, production equipment, and material storage.
- The pedestrian is to signal the operator that he/she is in a clear zone, maintain visual contact with the operator, and remain stationary until the mobile equipment is engaged and moves away from the clear zone.
- It is the responsibility of the operator to confirm the pedestrian’s all clear signal, maintain visual contact with the pedestrian and move slowly away from the clear zone.

Stenciling of mobile equipment
As a constant awareness reminder, all pieces of mobile equipment should be stenciled or placarded “Stay Clear – 3 Feet.” Print should be of sufficient size and color to provide obvious visibility to pedestrians, and shall be placed on the rear and both sides of the equipment.

Exceptions
If specific jobs prohibit a minimum “3 Foot Rule”, the following is suggested:
- The minimum clearance should be determined on a job specific basis. Due to plant layouts mobile equipment may traverse marked aisles that pass within the minimum 3’ of an employee’s workstation. A standing exception will be recognized for these situations provided the pedestrian is not working or walking in the aisle. If such is the case the “3 Foot Rule” should apply.
- Jobs requiring an exception should be thoroughly analyzed to determine if modifications to equipment or work zone layouts are feasible which would preclude the need for an exception.
- Where exceptions are deemed necessary, plant safety personnel and the General Manager/Manager of Operations should approve them. Exceptions should be incorporated in job hazard analysis with the specific additional hazards addressed with the intent of minimizing employee risk.
- Mobile equipment repair areas and equipment being repaired or evaluated for repair would be exempt from this policy, provided safe procedures are in place, and followed. Communication with all exposed employees should be held prior to movement of equipment.