

Published: December 6, 2019

Toolbox Talk – Signaling Techniques

Date _____ **Company Name** _____
Supervisor _____ **Job Name** _____

Communication is critical on a construction site. Everyday, we work with heavy machinery and dangerous materials. Without thorough communication between coworkers, these machines and materials can cause damage to property, injuries, and death. When we work with heavy machinery and vehicles (such as forklifts and cranes), this communication occurs in the form of hand signals. In today's Toolbox Talk, we will discuss the importance of proper signaling, and how to use your hands to communicate with drivers/operators.

Guidelines for Discussion

While working on a construction site, we rely on communication to complete tasks. Sometimes, this communication occurs in the form of hand signals. We use hand signals when verbal communication isn't efficient or possible, like between a worker on the ground and a crane operator. It is crucial that we establish a mutual understanding of the different signals so that we can actually rely on our non-verbal communication as a consistent resource in the completion of tasks.

A shared understanding of hand signals is key to the overall safety of the construction site. Think about it. If you are certain that you are signaling for a truck driver to move forward but he understands this to be the symbol for backing up, then this can result in damaged equipment, an injured coworker, or even death.

Here are some general rules to follow when using hand signals:

- Understand the signals before beginning a task that requires signaling. If possible, speak with the operator or driver beforehand to ensure you are on the same page when it comes to your signaling vocabulary.
- Assign only one signal person per operator. This prevents confusion for the operator, and for other workers on the ground.
- Before the operator begins his/her task, make sure he/she knows who will be signaling.
- The signal person must always stand in a position where he/she has a full view of both the operator and the work area.
- The signal person must always watch the load while the operator must watch the signal person.
- The signal person must be sure that the load (when suspended) does not travel over workers.
- When signaling, always warn your coworkers when loads are being moved in their area. Allow them time to move if necessary.
- When signaling, always look out for overhead power lines and any other obstructions that could be in the path of the load or vehicle.

Here are some general hand signals to remember:

STANDARD HAND SIGNALS



RAISE THE LOAD
(Thumb up)



LOWER THE LOAD
(Thumb down)



STOP or HOLD THE LOAD



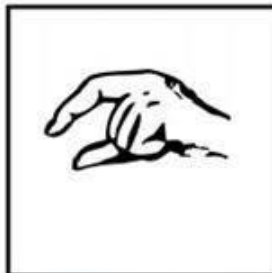
RELEASE LOAD
(Make scissor motion)



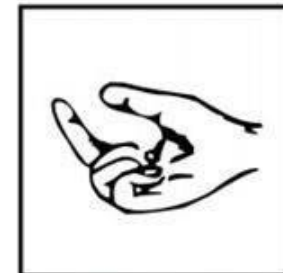
RAISE THE BOOM
(Palm side up)



LOWER THE BOOM
(Palm side down)



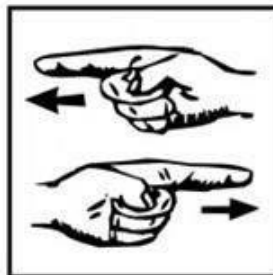
LOWER A LITTLE
(Palm side down)
Use pinching motion



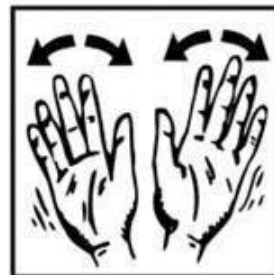
RAISE A LITTLE
(Palm side up)
Use pinching motion



TRAVEL - FORWARD
(Reverse - Use opposite
hand rotation)



HORIZONTAL MOVEMENTS



STOP - TRAVEL
(Hands high over head)

1. These Standard Hand Signals will apply to most operations where signals may be required.
2. Hand Signals will be given by One Man to avoid confusion of the operator.
3. When two or more operators are involved, point to the operator for whom the signal is intended.

Remember, while there are general rules of hand signaling, there are also differentiations based on the type of signaling operation. Depending on the rules of your company, there may be slightly different rules when you are signaling to a truck, forklift, crane, etc.

Additional Discussion Notes:

At the end of this Toolbox Talk, go over the specific rules of signaling that apply to your company and/or routine tasks. If necessary, assign a signal person or persons for various tasks.

Safety Recommendations

Job Specific Topics

Attendees

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