



Refuse Collection: Striking Fixed Objects

In 2022, a Member city garbage truck backed into another vehicle resulting in a bodily injury claim and \$25,600 of damage. Striking objects with moving equipment or with the vehicle itself is a common hazard faced by refuse collectors. Hazards in a vehicle's blind spot are often the leading cause of these types of incidents and can be prevented by controlling equipment movement, eliminating the hazard, or asking for assistance. The following tips can help you avoid striking a fixed object.

Avoiding Hazards

Fixed objects can be difficult to see because they are frequently hidden in the vehicle's blind spots, which consist of the following:

- **Ground Level:** Objects located below the hood of the vehicle such as curbs, guardrails, fire hydrants, and debris.
- **Eye Level:** Objects that, due to location and direction of the vehicle, remain hidden, such as street signs, traffic lights, utility poles, dumpsters, mailboxes, or parked cars.
- **Overhead:** Objects located above the vehicle that can only be seen while approaching the object from afar or getting out and looking, such as overpasses, power lines, tree branches, apartment awnings, and overhead signs.

Get Out and Look (GOAL)

Technology has improved an operator's ability to see around a refuse truck, but operators should still be cautious as the cameras might not show the full picture. Consider using the GOAL (get out and look) method by getting out and looking at fixed objects around the vehicle prior to moving. Remember the following:

- Avoid backing when riders are on the steps.
- Determine space limitations.
- Don't forget to look up.
- Use a spotter, when available.

Dumpster Location

The best methods to prevent striking a fixed object include eliminating or avoiding hazards. Employers should design service locations that promote safe collection:

- Avoid locations that require excessive backing, tight maneuvering, or blind corners.
- Avoid placing dumpster locations under or near overhead utilities.
- Avoid placing dumpsters at parking lot entrances where operators might block oncoming traffic, or worse, need to back into oncoming traffic.

Additional Resources:

- [Solid Waste Association of North America Safety Resources](#) (Multiple resources available)
- TMLIRP ROAD Ready <https://info.tmlirp.org/road-ready>
- [TMLIRP Media Library](#)
 - Be Safe, Be Proud for Supervisors and Route Managers DVD #127
 - Residential Pick-Up Driving and Helpers DVD #691
 - Sanitation Safety DVD #19