

Mobile Equipment: Separate People from Movement

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 6, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

A worker can be out of the operator's view while standing close to the machine. Deliveries, stored material and another crew can change the route during a shift. Plan separation before movement begins.

Objective: Show where people may walk and how equipment movement will stop if separation or communication fails.

Key hazards or failure points

Blind areas; reversing; people crossing travel routes; turning or articulated parts; unstable access; reliance on alarms or eye contact alone.

Practical controls

- Arrange work to separate people from equipment and reduce reversing. Use the site's designated travel routes, pedestrian paths and controlled crossings. Keep workers outside the machine's movement area.
- Use operators authorized and qualified for the equipment. Complete the applicable inspection and safe function checks. Report defects and keep affected equipment out of service until cleared.
- Agree signals, radio use and the stop response with the assigned observer where used. Before anyone approaches, the operator must stop and secure the machine as the procedure requires, then acknowledge access.

Verify It in the Field

With the machine safely secured, the operator and leader compare today's route, crossings and pedestrian controls with the site plan. Check obstructions, visibility and access conditions. Do not stand in an operating machine's blind area to demonstrate the risk.

The operator checks required brakes, warnings, visibility aids and other safety functions using the applicable instructions in a controlled area clear of people. Cameras and alarms support the plan; they do not establish separation by themselves.

Confirm the observer's safe position and communication before movement, where an observer is used. Record the machine, route, inspection reference, function-check result, checker and time. Resolve defects or uncertain criteria through the responsible person.

Stop and reassess

Stop movement if someone enters the restricted area, the observer or signal is lost, visibility deteriorates, the route changes or a safety function fails. Secure the machine, notify the leader and correct the gap. Recheck the controls and rebrief affected people before authorized restart.

Ask the crew

1. Where could someone unexpectedly enter today's equipment route?
2. Show the separation and communication checks that protect us.
3. What makes the operator stop, and how do we arrange a safe approach?

Before movement: clear the route, separate people and confirm the stop signal.

Sources: OSHA 1926.20(b), 1926.601 and 1926.602, as applicable; machine/site instructions.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.