

A backward look at safety

Rear-vision cameras keep Oldcastle Materials' equipment operators in plain view.

BY ROBERT J. SVEC

Forward-looking Oldcastle Materials places the utmost importance on vehicle safety. To eliminate backing accidents, they've begun looking backward with rear-vision camera systems.

Steve Benton, co-chair of the Oldcastle Group Safety Best Practice Committee (along with Tom Hill, Oldcastle CEO), began looking into rear-vision camera systems a year and a half ago to prevent backing accidents with front-discharge, ready-mix trucks on congested job sites and with front-end loaders in yard operations. This was also done in anticipation of a rumored MSHA mandate requiring rear-vision cameras on mobile equipment.

Oldcastle considered several vendors before selecting Safety Vision rear-camera systems for their initial installation on Clemente-Latham Concrete ready-mix trucks in Troy, N.Y. Today, there are more than 500 Safety Vision systems on Oldcastle vehicles across the country.

"When you equip that many vehicles, you want a good product that can survive the brutal condi-

tions in the ready-mix and quarry business, but you need a cost-effective product too," says Benton.

Systems install in less than an hour, Benton says. A small, wide-angle camera in a water-resistant housing mounts high on the back of the vehicle, cabled to a compact 5.5-in. monitor mounted in the cab. Positioning the monitor in a sight line with the unit's existing side mirror system eliminates blind spots and encourages use of both systems.

Craig Kalkman, safety director for Oldcastle's Dolomite Products in Rochester, N.Y., is responsible for several quarries, asphalt plants and ready-mix operations. Many front-end loaders used in yard operations are equipped with camera systems. They work in tight quarters, filling customer vehicles, Kalkman says, and customers are not always careful about where they drive or park. He feels cameras on some quarry loaders and haul trucks will be useful, too, and is working to identify the right vehicles.

Benton and Kalkman are pleased with the performance of these systems. They give operators an extra layer of security, allowing them to see behind the truck and a lane on each side. By leaving the cameras on while traveling, they can more safely negotiate heavy traffic.

Infrared illuminators provide clear images in very low light, particularly during night work on highway projects and in yard operations in late fall and winter, Benton says. Backlight compensation provides a consistent black and white image under all lighting conditions. Color monitors are available, but haven't been needed so far. The compactness of the monitors is appreciated, considering the host of other electronic equipment competing for cab space.

A particularly pleasant surprise was the accompanying audio system that allows workers who are outside the vehicle to verbally alert the operator to possible hazards. It replaces often-misinterpreted hand signals that are often used when guiding trucks into position.

The ability to withstand constant exposure to water, dust and heavy vibration without problems is another major benefit. So far, of the 500-plus units installed, less than half a dozen have had problems. "These camera systems are really going to help our safety efforts in all phases," Benton says. "I don't see a downside thus far and the price is right on."

Robert J. Svec is a Bay Village, Ohio-based freelancer.



A camera is mounted to the chassis (above) and a monitor is mounted in the cab (left).

A look back

Safety Vision technology is helping loader operators and truck drivers keep an eye on what is happening in areas they typically wouldn't be able to see. "The rear-vision camera system gives the operator the ability to see behind the truck and a lane on each side," says Steve Sappol, Safety Vision account executive. "It essentially functions as a rear-view mirror with a very wide field of view. The camera incorporates infrared technology so the operator will see a terrific image in low light, and the camera has built-in audio so those near the truck can talk to the operator."

Features of the Safety Vision rear-vision camera system include:

- Heavy-duty design can withstand harsh environments.
- Black-and-white or color systems.
- Water-resistant housing.
- Infrared illuminators for low-light working conditions.
- Threaded o-ring sealed connectors for water-tight connections.
- Multi-sectional cables for easy maintenance.
- Wide field of view.
- Built-in microphone for crisp, clear audio.
- High-impact-resistant housing.
- Backlight compensation to control picture quality in all lighting conditions.

For more information, contact Safety Vision at 800-850-8855, www.safetyvision.com.



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