

Secure Digging: 8 Safety Tips For Mini Excavators

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This list of tips on operating and maintaining mini excavators is contributed by MiniFinalDrives.com, a company owned and operated by L&M HydraComm LLC. This family business is founded on over 50 years experience in the heavy equipment industry. Located in Salisbury, NC, the company has operated in the automotive and heavy equipment industries for over 70 years across three generations.



Excavators are essential pieces of heavy construction equipment. They're fundamental to a wide variety of industries that rely on them to move dirt and break ground. But excavators can't operate themselves, and even trained professionals are at risk of getting hurt when operating this kind of heavy machinery. Here are a few tips for landscape professionals to remember in order to operate mini excavators safely and securely.

1. Know the components of your excavator. You need to have a comprehensive knowledge of your excavator's components before you begin operating the

machine. In fact, this is true for all types of construction equipment. You should know the engine, the machine's hydraulic fluid levels, all safety devices, all controls for proper function, and more. When you know the components of the equipment, you're better able to determine when something is wrong with the machine.

2. Make sure the excavator is serviced regularly. It's not enough to be able to recognize when something is wrong with the components of your excavator. Your excavator, like any other large machine, needs to be serviced regularly to keep it in good working condition. Follow a regular maintenance routine to avoid downtime, which can end up costing you a good chunk of revenue in the long run. Don't ignore the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule and pay close attention to small details. To make sure your excavator is receiving regular maintenance, consider keeping a maintenance log so you know who serviced the machine last and when it was last serviced.

3. Regularly change your hydraulic oil. It's not just the body of your excavator that needs to be serviced regularly. You also need to change your hydraulic oil per your manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule. This is often in the 2,000 to 4,000-hour timeframe. Always make sure to change the hydraulic oil before it appears cloudy and to use the hydraulic oil that's recommended by the manufacturer. If you use a different hydraulic oil, you could end up using one with the incorrect viscosity. This can keep the hydraulic oil from being able to protect the moving parts in the excavator, which leads to overheating and unplanned breakdowns.

4. Know your responsibilities before you operate the machinery. It's one thing to know your excavator is in good shape for operation and another to operate the excavator safely. Only by taking the proper care in how you operate your machinery can you reduce the risk of injuries to yourself and those around you. Your responsibilities when operating an excavator include cleaning the glass of the cab regularly, keeping the cab clean of dirt and debris, testing each control before beginning work, and greasing the bucket hinge pins as needed.

5. Use the standard three-point method. When you're climbing out of or climbing into the cab, it's vital to use the standard three-point method. Keep two feet and a hand (or two hands and a foot) in contact with the machine as you move the remaining hand or foot. You should always enter and exit the excavator while facing the machine. Keep your footwear clean of any grease or excessive mud to keep yourself from slipping when climbing in and out of the cab. Never jump out of the excavator.

6. Be aware of your surroundings and working conditions. Excavators aren't light pieces of equipment. They can weigh anywhere between 3,500 to 185,000 lbs. Even a mini excavator can be a major safety concern if something were to go wrong. That being said, it's vital that you're aware of your surroundings and working conditions when you're operating an excavator. While it's good to block out distractions while operating a machine, you need to be aware of other people and make sure you know where utilities are located before you start digging.

7. Keep an eye on track tension. Speaking of being aware of your working conditions, it's good to remember that rubber tracks need to be adjusted based on different ground conditions and applications. If you're using a loose track, you could end up with accelerated wear. If you're using a track that's too tight, you could end up completely tearing the rubber on the track. Avoid expensive repairs by paying close attention to your tracks whether they're rubber or steel.

8. Know the load limits of your machine. Your excavator could be in the best possible shape. But if you don't know your load limits, you could end up hurting the excavator, yourself, and those around you. Overloading the bucket can make the excavator tip over or become unstable. Consult your excavator's load chart and don't exceed that capacity at any time for any reason.

Mini excavators may not be as large as a standard excavator, but they still require a trained professional to operate them. By following the tips above, you can reduce your risk of injury and ensure you're operating your mini excavator with safety in mind.

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