



AmTrust North America
An AmTrust Financial Company

Safety Zone

Baler Basics

Grocery store employees use balers to compact paper and cardboard, such as boxes. A baler exerts thousands of pounds of pressure in its process. This type of pressure can crush a hand or an arm. Serious accidents occur when workers try to bypass the baler safety systems. Bypassing safety systems does not make the work faster or easier. Balers use a 30-second cycle, so operators have little time to react once the baling cycle starts.

Manufacturers equip balers with a guard gate designed to let the ram/compressor crush the boxes safely. The interlocked ram controls are another safety feature designed to prevent ram movement when the door is open. Operators must use hand tools to open access covers and doors. These safety measures are important, but it is the operator's responsibility to keep arms, legs, or their entire bodies, out of the machine.

Manufacturers clearly label all controls. Balers also have a highly visible emergency shut-off on the control panel. Balers are equipped with a locking system to prevent unauthorized operation. Never leave the key in the baler control panel.

Improperly maintained equipment can cause electrical short-circuits or explosions.

Injuries also happen when a worker

- climbs a baler and then falls,
- cuts him or herself on sharp metal, or
- reaches into the baling area while the machine is operating with the safety guards bypassed - or when unclogging the machine - and gets body parts caught, crushed, or cut.

Never bypass a safety guard, even if you think that doing so will speed up the work. Accidents can occur any time an employee disables or bypasses a safety guard. While that person may not get hurt the first time they disable a safety guard, too often the next person that uses the baler does.

Control the perimeter around the machine. When baling, do not stand in front of the bale door while the machine is ejecting the bale. An ejected bale or door can easily strike anyone nearby. Do not tie the bale improperly, use too few ties, or tighten the ties so much that they break. Use the tool provided to unclog a bale; never use your hands.

Before using the baler, perform the following steps.

1. Visually inspect the baler.
2. Check that the baler door or gate closes before the ram comes down.
3. If opening the gate does not stop the ram movement, do not use the baler. Immediately report the issue to management.
4. Check that other guards are in place.
5. Check that power cords are not worn or frayed.

If you believe the baler is not safe to operate, do not use it. Inform your supervisor and have the equipment removed from service until repairs are complete. Take time to carefully load the baler by placing the cardboard and not tossing it in.

Summary of safety tips

- No one under 18 can use the baler. Employers should post a visible warning that those under 18 cannot use the machine.
- Do not operate a baler unless trained to do so.
- Never bypass or disable any safety device or system.
- Only one person should load and operate at a time even if it seems convenient to use a helper.
- Know the location of all controls before operating the machines.
- Never leave an operating machine unattended.
- Lock balers and compactors, especially if they are accessible to the public to prevent unauthorized use.
- Do not leave the key in the control panel.
- Don't overexert by throwing items in the baler. If a load is heavy, ask for help.
- If you feel uncomfortable using a baler, or have not used one recently, ask your supervisor for re-training. Your supervisor will help ensure you understand how to operate any equipment you encounter.

Are You In The Zone?

1. Balers come equipped with _____.
2. What is the operator's responsibility?
3. Never leave the key _____.
4. How old must someone be to operate a baler?
5. What are some baler hazards?
6. What are some things not to do when baling?
7. What should you do to prevent unauthorized use?

I have received information on baler basics.

Employee Name: _____ Date: _____

For additional information and resources on this topic and other safety and risk management subjects be sure to visit the Loss Control section on our website:

<https://www.amtrustgroup.com/small-business-insurance/claims/prevention>

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