Always wear a seat belt when operating heavy equipment.

One of the easiest, most important things an equipment operator can do to stay safe is to fasten his or her seat belt. Wearing a seat belt protects against injury in the event of a serious accident. It can also help the operator maintain control during sudden extreme movement. Nevertheless, we continue to see serious injuries and fatalities resulting from lack of seat belt usage. MSHA engineers estimate that up to 4 miners’ lives could be saved each year if seat belts were used universally. Seat belts are the last line of defense from being thrown around the cabin in the event of a rollover.

During a rollover, the ROPS (Roll Over Protection Structure) protects the secured operator from being crushed by the machine. However, when the operator is not secured by a seat belt, he or she may be thrown off and crushed by the machine, often by the ROPS itself.

OSHA studied over 50 cases of rollover:

- 14 of 19 accidents, in which ROPS was installed and the operator was not wearing a seat belt, resulted in fatalities.
- In the 5 cases studied in which the machine was equipped with ROPS and the seat belt was worn, none resulted in worker deaths.

30 CFR § 56.14130 Roll-over protective structures (ROPS) and seat belts.
§ 56.14130(g) Wearing seat belts. Seat belts shall be worn by the equipment operator except that when operating graders from a standing position, the grader operator shall wear safety lines and a harness in place of a seat belt.
30 CFR § 56.14131 Seat belts for haulage trucks.
§ 56.14131(a) Seat belts shall be provided and worn in haulage trucks.

-MSHA Regulations