

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Warehouse Safety

Warehouses range from product distribution centers to popular retailers that sell oversize and bulk products. Whether it is an industrial, commercial or retail facility, warehouse workers should follow safety guidelines for loading docks, conveyor systems, forklifts and pallet jacks, material storage and handling, and good housekeeping.



Products enter and exit warehouses through truck and loading dock systems that are usually at a height from the ground. When loading and unloading materials, workers should pay special attention to avoid falls from elevated docks and ramps; yellow striping can draw attention to edges. Trucks delivering goods should be treated cautiously while they are parked at the loading dock. The area between the dock and truck is hazardous because

a rolling truck can cause a crush injury; truck wheels should be chocked while unloading.

In some warehouses, products may be placed on conveyor systems that distribute them to different areas in the facility. Workers must avoid placing body parts or hair near conveyors because moving wheels and belts pose a pinch point hazard. Elevated conveyors should have safety nets to avoid dropping products on workers below. Workers need training on the location of on/off buttons and emergency stop buttons for conveyor systems and lock out/tag out procedures are required whenever servicing conveyors.

Forklifts and pallet jacks help move products from the shipping area into and around the warehouse. Forklifts are powered industrial trucks; forklift operators require training and certification while pallet jack operators require training only. Loads should be properly lifted on forks and stabilized, then slowly and deliberately taken to their assigned location. Forklifts and pallet jacks should never be used as rides or man lifts.

When large, awkward, and/or heavy items are warehoused, they become a challenge to store in a safe manner. Storage shelving and rack systems should be sturdy, braced, and spacious enough to allow people and equipment to move freely. When goods are shelved, they require slow and careful placement to avoid disturbing or pushing products off the facing aisle on to coworkers below. Products should be stored flat and inside the shelving units with aisle ways kept clear.



Pallets used for stacking products should be sturdy and in good condition; damaged or unstable pallet items should be restacked on a new one. Where possible, palletized products should be shrink-wrapped or baled for stability.

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Workers can protect themselves on the job with personal protective equipment (PPE) such as steel-toed shoes, gloves, and hard hats or bump caps. Proper lifting techniques protect backs. Safe lifting also prevents loads from shifting, falling, and crushing fingers, hands and toes.

Good housekeeping in a warehouse requires keeping dirt, oil, and debris off the docks and floors. Floors should be non-slippery and free from pits and dents. Excess garbage, boxes, baling materials, and other recyclables should be removed and stored properly.

Training on the hazards and attention to procedures will make sure warehouse workers stay safe.

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.