



Material Handling – Loading and Unloading



Loading and unloading material from trucks, trailers, and storage shelves presents unique risks to the operators of motorized industrial trucks, such as forklifts and hand and hand/rider trucks. Serious injury and death have been known to occur during loading and unloading operations.

General Safe Guidelines

1. NEVER attempt to operate a forklift or other powered industrial equipment until trained and authorized to do so.
2. Prior to loading and unloading trucks and trailers, complete the following whether the truck/trailer is at a dock or in the yard:
 - a. Ensure the vehicle being loaded or unloaded has been turned off.
 - b. Ensure the wheels of the truck or trailer have been properly secured with chock blocks or other device that prevents movement, such as a dock lock.
 - c. Ensure trailer nose stands/jacks are fully engaged if the tractor has been removed.
 - d. Walk the floor of the truck/trailer prior to beginning loading operations to identify floor defects and weaknesses.
3. Designate a “driver waiting area” to keep drivers out of the area of the loading/unloading operations.
4. Obtain portable lights if necessary to ensure the interior of the truck/trailer is well lighted and visible during loading and unloading operations.
5. Shrink wrap palletized loads to prevent the loads from shifting during movement.
6. Never drive a forklift into an elevator unless trained to do so and the elevator is rated for the load (this includes the weight of the driver, the forklift, and the load on the forklift).

Dock Safety

1. Ensure the edges of loading docks are marked.
2. Install dock barriers, such as chains equipped with signs, to warn drivers and pedestrians of the dock fall hazards.
3. Use dock boards or plates to bridge the gap between the dock and the trailer.
4. Get assistance to move the dock board/plate into place where automated dock plates are not in use.

Loading/Unloading in the Yard

1. Install traffic cones to delineate the travel path from the vehicle being loaded and the area where the load is being deposited.

2. Post additional signs to warn pedestrians away from the area.
3. Ensure the delineated traffic area is large enough to allow the forklift operator to lower the load and turn into the direction of travel.

Loading and Unloading Storage Shelves

1. Label the storage shelves/racks with their weight bearing capacity. Never exceed this capacity.
2. Ensure the storage shelves/racks are anchored to the ground.
3. Never place a pallet into storage racks if it is too short to fully engage both of the rack rails.

Talk to your supervisor if you have any questions about this information.