

MATERIAL HANDLING/PLACEMENT

A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

MATERIAL HANDLING/PLACEMENT

The tradition of lifting objects by hand with a straight back and bent knees was a simplistic explanation for complicated body mechanics. That tradition also assumed there was a clean and neat working area with room for moving hands-on material. But workers are too smart for that simple explanation; they can think of more adaptable procedures for such situations. What you will hear about now are basic principles for lifting that apply to you, the equipment you are using and the product that you are moving.

Prepare for placement:

- Before you pick it up, you must be ready to set it down. This applies to picking up a pencil or to picking up a 200-ton boiler in a power plant. Likewise, if you are not ready to set it down, you are not ready to lift it up.
- Preparing for placement is the first rule for any kind of material handling. If you are handling material, you do not want to hold it any longer than necessary. You must have a place to set it down.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

Some questions to ask and answers to discuss as they relate to your plant operations and the materials workers handle are: What pallet do you set the product on--the first pallet on the bottom or the last one on the top? How much space will you need to turn in order to get to the shelf? Is the stack of pallets below or beside you stable? Are the tops of your product containers level so another pallet can be put on top? How high are you allowed to place materials? Are materials stored according to product or by type of container?

Are there load limits designed especially for storage over warehouse offices and other shop-built overhead storage areas?

Plan your route:

- Has anyone here ever had a box in their hands or a load on their forklift and discovered a door was locked, the floor was wet or had to deal with ramps, inclines or stairs?

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

Give employees an opportunity to answer these questions and then proceed with the following discussion:

Always look at least 10 feet ahead in the direction you are traveling when carrying a load and try to visualize the path of at least two corners ahead of you. Create a carrying space ahead of you whether you are walking or operating equipment to move materials.

Walk-behind and ride-on type pallet movers must have clear paths and good surfaces to roll across. The wrong surfaces (floors that have cracks, dips, holes, or slippery and bumpy areas) can cause an injury when the pallet mover suddenly stops or shifts its load.

Ramps and inclines must be anticipated when manually or mechanically moving a load. With the exception of walk-behind pallet jacks, pallets should be on the uphill side of the equipment so the material will not slide off. Plan where you will make turns in order to position mobile equipment for the ramp.

Prepare the mover:

- Whether you are moving materials manually or mechanically, you must be prepared. Warm-up time is important because an engine wears out more quickly, when put to work immediately after you turn it on.
- Your muscles also need a warm-up period. The greatest number of sports injuries occur when athletes do not warm up properly. Even with years of training, the moment for exhibition can be destroyed when there is no warm-up period.
- Speakers warm up their throats and their minds, race car drivers warm up their engines and their mental attitudes, and ovens are warmed for proper use. Similarly, we must learn to warm up our muscles before we use them to lift.
- Without warming up, we are more likely to incur an injury or cause one for someone close by.
- Mechanical equipment must be properly inspected before every shift. Forklifts and other mechanical moving equipment have inspection checklists; however, the only checklist for your body is in your mind. For best results, use your mental checklist before lifting.

- Taking proper care of your body is important for lifting tasks in the same way it is necessary to take care of a crane, forklift or two-wheeled dolly. Ask yourself if you are physically ready to perform a task just as you would ask if a forklift is ready for a job.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

You may want to discuss the importance of personal health and fitness habits with the group. Overweight, poor posture, inactive muscles head colds and even car seats positioned too far back when driving, can cause overexertion injuries when lifting.

Keep your body moving:

- The longer you stand in one place while lifting, the more likely your muscles are to resist change. Under tension, muscles relax and accept a certain strain limit.
- When handling material always turn your entire body when changing directions.
- Turning only the upper part of your body when handling a load causes severe strain on these muscles.
- There is more than one way to lift, but one rule that remains the same whether you're handling materials manually or using equipment is that the load must be balanced. Some people will do this with straight backs and bent knees. Some will do it by looking like a crane by using one leg as a counterlever and bending completely at the waist. Others will stand erect and then squat down as if their back was directly against the wall. And others will lift equal weights in each hand for balance. Without balance, your muscles will overcompensate by themselves and you will suffer from overexertion.
- Overexertion of a muscle translates into pain and takes a long time to heal properly. A sprained ankle is one type of overexertion injury caused by trying to keep your foot straight when you step on an uneven surface or because your foot is unbalanced and cannot support your body.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

The main point of this talk is to be prepared for material handling instead of reacting to the strain of lifting. Emphasize the need for workers to create a safe-lifting-space cushion around themselves when handling materials. The muscles they protect will be their own and the pain they prevent will allow them to enjoy tomorrow.