

SAFETY MEMO

November 15th, 2021 – Warehouse Hazards



Did you know?

Background

Work in warehouses presents several dangers specific to this work environment. It is important that warehouse hazards are easily spotted when visiting a factory or facility.

Danger of Falling Objects

Materials are often stored high up to maximize space. This adds a risk of falling objects when handling pallets or material with the forklift.

A person should always walk in the pedestrian areas reserved for the circulation of personnel. Also move out of the way when unloading or loading operations are carried out. In several facilities, safety nets are installed to protect pedestrian spaces in the warehouse. These nets prevent material from falling on people walking through the warehouse.

Forklift Collision Hazard

Normally, people using a forklift should have adequate training in handling such equipment. Often forklift operators are focused on their work and productivity and may not be watching for foot traffic in warehouse aisles. It may also be difficult for them to avoid a collision with you if you are in a blind spot or near an intersection.

A forklift has a braking distance of 3 m when travelling at 6 km/h (walking speed). A distance of at least 5 m should be maintained when passing a moving forklift. The driver usually has a horn, a whistle and/or a buzzer. Move to a safe area out of the path of travel if you hear a buzzer and a forklift is approaching.

Take extra caution and know the location of forklifts working in your area. People walking in the warehouse should make themselves visible to the operator when approaching a forklift. Make eye contact with the driver before approaching or walking in the travel path.

Remember that, in a warehouse, the forklift has the right of way due to their importance with facility production. Ensure that foot traffic is limited to areas clearly labelled as pedestrian walkways. Listen and look for forklifts when

approaching intersections. More companies are now using projectors in front of their forklifts, creating a visual identification of a forklift approaching.



Figure 1: Warehouse Example (with permission from Pixabay)

Loading and Unloading Areas

Loading and unloading areas can also be dangerous. Potential incidents include:

- Getting stuck between a forklift and a fixed object
- Being hit by a truck
- Improper or no dock plate leading to truck or trailer rolling away

Slipping and Falling

Slips make up about 20% of compensation claims in work environments¹. Watch out for uneven floors, debris and items left in the walkway, and slippery floors. In addition, refrigerated or humidified warehouses present additional hazards related to potential for water or ice on walking surfaces.

Proper footwear, situational awareness and intentional foot placement will reduce instances of slips, trips and falls.

Summary

Work in warehouses presents many unique hazards that need to be highlighted. Planning for control of these hazards will lead to successful, safe work in warehouses.

¹ Ontario Ministry of Labour, Warehouses Hazards

https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/french/hs/sawo/pubs/fs_warehouse.php#:~:text=Le%20travail%20dans%20un%20entrep%C3%B4t,graves%20et%20m%C3%Aame%20la%20mort.&text=Une%20personne%20qui%20travaille%20dans,aide%20d'un%20chariot%20C3%A9l%C3%A9vateur.

