

Empty Skids and Pallets

Toolbox Talk

Handling empty skids and pallets may seem routine to most of us, but what appears to be a simple job can often lead to serious injuries when safety precautions aren't taken. Since material handling causes more injuries than any other type of work, let's take a few moments to talk about some of the steps we can take to avoid injury.

The first thing to do before handling skids and pallets is to inspect them for splinters, loose nails, damage from being dropped, and other defects.

We can guard against injuries caused by such defects by using leather work gloves and safety shoes.

If a unit appears to be unsafe, it should be set aside, stacked carefully, and marked for repair or discard. Scrapped units that need to be moved over distances require the use of a truck or dolly. If units are to be burned, all fire and safety regulations must be observed.

Lifting is the leading cause of on-the-job injuries suffered by workers. Special care needs to be taken when lifting skids. It usually requires two people of similar height lifting in unison to avoid injury.

Workers need to bend at the knees and use the strong leg muscles to accomplish the lift. Keep the back straight and stay close to the object being lifted.

To ensure that skids and pallets are stable, stack them no higher than four feet and always keep them flat, never on end. Piles and individual units must be kept away from aisles and doorways.

Avoid obstructing exits, switch boxes, fire extinguishers, or other emergency equipment. Pallets should not stick out into aisles where someone will bump into or trip over them, or have

to walk or step over them, because this also may result in an accident.

When using separate skid runners and platforms, stack them in a rack no more than 32 units high. Two people are needed to remove platforms from the rack, with a person positioned on each side of the rack for safe handling.

Consider the weight capacity of the floor when stacking skids and pallets. Also, remember the crush strength of units must not be exceeded. When working with cardboard, allow for the lower strength that makes it easier to damage than wood.

In humid weather, cardboard will weaken further from absorbing moisture. A clear work area contributes to our safety and the safety of our neighbors. If we use common sense and the basic safety precautions we've just talked about, we can be sure that accidents and injuries will be kept to a minimum.

Let's review those precautions one more time.

- Inspect pallets and skids for hazards like nails and splinters. Stacks of pallets stored outdoors for a time can harbor wasps or snakes.
- Work in unison with someone else for safe handling of skids.
- Remember to use safe lifting techniques.
- Stack skids and pallets no more than four feet high.
- Use protective equipment for your hands and feet.
- Be sure stacks don't obstruct emergency equipment.
- Discard or repair unsafe units.
- Keep your work area clean.

