

Workplace Safety Group

September 2009

Monthly News e-Letter

Warehouse Worker Safety

A comprehensive Facilities Safety Program begins with design and layout, and includes everything up to emergency preparedness.

OBJECTIVES:

- To recognize workplace hazards
- To prevent accident and injury
- To follow safe work practices
- To select and use proper personal protective equipment (PPE)
- To understand your duties and rights under the occupational health and safety legislation
- [OH&S Act link](#)



Racking Inspections

One of the challenges of inspecting and maintaining storage racks is that they can be impacted by a forklift truck soon after having been inspected.

The cause of impact by forklift is not necessarily operator negligence; even well-trained, experienced forklift operators can impact storage racks.



Implied in the above observation is the need for regular inspections and maintenance of storage racks. For some operations, it might be appropriate to conduct monthly inspections.

Note that not all forklift impact cause serious and immediately obvious damage to storage racks. Minor impact to front posts of upright frames can cause rack components to warp over time.



Where forklift impact causes obvious damage to storage racks, operators should report incidents without fear of reprisals so that corrective action can be taken. Based on personal experience, in general, operators do not report forklift impact of storage racks. Impact reporting must be encouraged in a positive, constructive manner, to allow for prompt remedial action.

One very good reason to implement a regular inspection and maintenance program is to avoid workplace injuries and fatalities. Anyone, who has worked with forklifts and storage racks, whether in a manufacturing plant, warehouse or distribution center, recognizes the ever present potential for accidents.

A fundamental consideration concerning storage racks is whether they are appropriate for the storage application. Another consideration is the general condition of rack components. There are two aspects to this issue: 1. the age of the rack and the extent of wear that it has experienced over time; 2. the other is specifically related to damage caused by forklift impact.

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Warehouse Worker Safety

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Workplace Violence

Due Diligence

WHMIS

Some companies have well-organized rack inspection programs; however, many others need to implement some type of regular inspection program. A few approaches that make sense include: having inspections done by trained, in-house staff or retaining the services of qualified professionals who offer this service. Another approach is to employ a combination of both, i.e. have trained staff do periodic inspections, and also use outside professionals who can provide additional expertise, on an as-needed basis.

Regardless of the approach used, it seems appropriate, given the current level of regulation, that in-house staff be provided with training related to inspection and maintenance of storage racks. Training sessions can provide background information on applicable standards and specifications, legal considerations and risks associated with racks.

Particularly useful, to those who inspect and maintain storage racks, is information related to visual inspection, including damage identification and classification as well as corrective action to be taken in a variety of scenarios.

Those who should attend training related to racking inspection and maintenance include forklift operators, maintenance personnel and operations managers. Each participant will use the information in a manner relevant to his or her particular job.

When inspecting and maintaining storage racks, it is important to understand what can go wrong and taking necessary steps to avoid possible accidents, including life-altering ones.

Many thanks to Jack Jagernauth for permission to use his invaluable insights as published in the June 2009 issue of OIM (Ontario Industrial Magazine).

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