



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 28: July 7th – 11th, 2025

Material Storage Safety

Introduction

This week we will dive a little deeper into storage safety practices for the industrial setting. Even the best of the best Tetris© masters are often challenged when it comes to not only finding room to store objects of many shapes and sizes but doing so in a safe manner. This week we will share some safety tips and best practices for storing materials in your workplace.

Monday – What are the Hazards of Improperly Stored Material?

There are many hazards associated with material handling but today we are going to focus on material storage related hazards. The primary hazard that typically comes to mind first is falling material which in the best-case scenario could result in a near miss or in the worst case scenario could result in a fatality. There are other hazards however, including material blocking critical egress paths. This unsafe practice prevents employees from making a quick and safe exit in the event of an emergency. Another potentially deadly hazard is fire as a result of storing flammable material improperly.

Tuesday – Use the Correct Rack Type and Rack Material for Storing your Products

Depending on the nature of the business, product variation in a single facility can range from tens to thousands in size, weight, and quantity. Having the proper racking size, weight capacity and material is critical to ensure your products are stored safely to prevent damage to the product and most importantly to prevent injuring employees handling the products.

Wednesday – Stacking Material

Stacking materials improperly could be deadly. Falling materials and collapsing loads can crush or pin workers, causing injuries or death. To help prevent injuries when stacking materials, workers must do the following:

- Stack lumber no more than 16 feet high if it is handled manually, and no more than 20 feet if using a forklift; ■ Remove all nails from used lumber before stacking; ■ Stack and level lumber on solidly supported bracing; ■ Ensure that stacks are stable and self-supporting; ■ Do not store pipes and bars in racks that face main aisles to avoid creating a hazard to passersby when removing supplies; ■ Stack bags and bundles in interlocking rows to keep them secure; and ■ Stack bagged material by stepping back the layers and cross-keying the bags at least every ten layers (to remove bags from the stack, start from the top row first).

Thursday – Additional Precautions to Avoid Storage Hazards

OSHA has very specific requirements for material storage. Today we will expand on the requirements and best practices for safe storage.

- Store baled paper and rags inside a building no closer than 18 inches to the walls, partitions, or sprinkler heads; ■ Band boxed materials or secure them with cross-ties or shrink plastic fiber; ■ Stack drums, barrels, and kegs symmetrically; ■ Block the bottom tiers of drums, barrels, and kegs to keep them from rolling if stored on their sides; ■ Place planks, sheets of plywood dunnage, or pallets between each tier of drums, barrels, and kegs to make a firm, flat, stacking surface when stacking on end; ■ Chock the bottom tier of drums, barrels, and kegs on each side to prevent shifting in either direction when stacking two or more tiers high; and ■ Stack and block poles as well as structural steel, bar stock, and other cylindrical materials to prevent spreading or tilting unless they are in racks



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Friday – Other Best Practices

So many great tips, we can't stop yet! Here are a few more best practices to safely store materials in your workplace.

- Paint walls or posts with stripes to indicate maximum stacking heights for quick reference; ■ Observe height limitations when stacking materials to avoid overhead damage; ■ Consider the need for availability of the material. Set up your storage accordingly to reduce the need to move product ■ Place only bound material on racks, and secure it by stacking, blocking, or interlocking to prevent it from sliding, falling, or collapsing.