

Warehouse Worker Safety

Workers in warehouse distribution centers may be exposed to hazards related to forklifts, heat, conveyor belts, material handling, and more. This fact sheet provides helpful information on how to eliminate or control your exposure to some of these hazards.

Your employer is responsible for implementing an effective written injury and illness prevention program (IIPP), as well as other safety & health programs, to reduce your risk of exposure to these hazards and prevent injuries and illnesses in the workplace.

Preventing Heat Illness

Reduce your risk of heat illness by taking cool-down breaks and drinking water frequently. Your employer is required to make drinking water readily available to all workers free of charge and allow sufficient time to drink water.

Let your supervisor know if you feel any symptoms of heat illness, which may include:

- Heavy sweating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Headache
- Disorientation or irrational behavior

Reduce your exposure to potential heat sources if possible. Allow time for hot metal shipping containers to cool down before entering them.

Your employer is required to implement protective measures when necessary to prevent heat illness. For example, your employer can install portable fans or, when feasible, place shipping containers inside a building during loading or unloading operations.

Preventing Repetitive Motion Injuries

The following techniques can help prevent injuries due to repetitive tasks:

- Rotate tasks to change motions and give affected body parts a rest.
- Notify your supervisor when there is a process quota system that increases the potential for injury.
- Use hand tools properly designed for the task.
- Use proper postures and lifting techniques.



- Use simple transport devices like carts, dollies, portable scissor lifts, stackers, and hand trucks, when feasible.
- Request a workstation ergonomic evaluation or re-design if you experience ongoing discomfort.

Warehouse distribution center employers cannot require workers to meet quotas that prevent or interfere with worker meal or rest breaks, use of bathrooms (including reasonable travel time to and from bathroom facilities), or any occupational health and safety standard.

Working Safely Around Forklifts

Workers can be severely injured by forklifts and other powered industrial trucks, even if they are not the equipment operator. Use the following precautions when working around moving equipment:

- Make eye contact with operators and spotters before crossing intersections or entering work areas.

(continued on next page)



- In cold storage areas. Wear appropriate cold weather PPE, such as cold-resistant gloves.

Dual-Employers and Temporary (Temp) Agencies

If you are a temporary worker, both your temp agency and the host employer whose warehouse you work at are responsible for your safety and health and must protect you against hazards in the workplace. Temporary agencies and the host employer must provide you with workplace protections as required by Cal/OSHA standards, such as appropriate training and PPE.

COVID-19 and Other Infection Prevention

Workers should take precautions and follow current CDPH guidelines for COVID-19 prevention. Employers are required to comply with applicable safety regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Dealing with Workplace Violence

Your employer is required to take and respond to your reports of workplace violence. They must also keep a log of such incidents and train you on their workplace violence prevention plan.

Resources

All workers have a right to a safe and healthful workplace, regardless of immigration status, and may file confidential complaints about workplace safety and health hazards with Cal/OSHA.

Workers with work-related questions or complaints may contact the Cal/OSHA Call Center in English or Spanish at 833-579-0927.

Learn more about heat illness prevention on Cal/OSHA's website: 99calor.org or call the Heat Helpline at 1-877-99-CALOR (1-877-992-2567).

- Be aware of traffic lanes and blind intersections.
- Look out for unsafe loads.
- Listen for horns.
- Stay in designated pedestrian walkways.
- Immediately notify your supervisor if you notice the smell of exhaust fumes from powered vehicles or if you become lightheaded or dizzy.

Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls

Immediately notify your supervisor of potential hazards in the workplace that could lead to slips, trips, and falls, such as:

- Uneven and slippery surfaces.
- Cluttered or blocked walkways.
- Inadequate lighting.
- Improperly stacked or stored materials, tools, and equipment.

Using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Wear PPE, such as safety shoes and gloves, to protect yourself from hazards in the warehouse. When required, PPE must be provided by your employer. This is especially true when it comes to working:

- With sharp tools such as box cutters, knives, or tape guns.
- With hazardous chemicals. Always wear appropriate gloves and eye protection, where applicable.

September 2024

This document is available with active links at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications

For assistance regarding this subject matter, employers may contact

Cal/OSHA Consultation Services at 1-800-963-9424 or InfoCons@dir.ca.gov

www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html

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