

Heavy-Duty Movers Require Heavy-Duty Precautions

At one time or another, virtually all your workers will engage in the manual handling of various materials. But when that material handling involves sophisticated material movers like conveyors, powered industrial trucks, and cranes, hoists, or derricks, the dangers tend to be more severe.

Working with heavy-duty material movers includes the possibility of being struck by falling objects, having fingers or clothing caught between pinch points, or the kinds of accidents that can occur because of unsafe operation of any motor vehicle. Safe lifting also remains an important element.

Conveyors

Because various sorts and sizes of conveyors have been around so long, they are often taken for granted, and the potential dangers of their use may not be recognized. Also, because they tend to move steadily, smoothly, and sometimes silently, workers may be lulled into a false sense of security around them. Here are some pointers on what to be alert for:

- When objects are manually placed on or removed from conveyors, the worker's hands may be pinched between the object and the belt.
- Loose clothing and jewelry worn near conveyors present a risk of serious injury if caught in the mechanism.
- Workers should never ride on a conveyor or crawl over or under one; only an approved crossover should be used.
- When a conveyor runs at head height, or carries material hung from hooks, measures must be taken to prevent struck-by accidents.
- Similarly, precautions must be taken to prevent injury from materials that could fall from a conveyor that runs overhead-e.g., wear safety hats; keep a prudent distance.
- When repairs are needed, conveyors should be stopped, the controls locked out and tagged with "Do Not Operate," and equipment should be restarted only when all is clear.
- If it's necessary to clean belts or drums while the equipment is in motion, barrier guards should be provided at pinch points.

Powered Industrial Trucks

As explained in CFR 1910.178(a), powered industrial trucks include "fork trucks, tractors, platform lift trucks, motorized hand trucks, and

other specialized industrial trucks powered by electric motors or internal combustion engines." The section does not apply to trucks powered by compressed air or nonflammable compressed gas, or to farm vehicles of the type intended primarily for earth moving or over-the-road hauling.

Trucks are classified according to the locations in which they may and may not be used--e.g., those in which flammable gases, vapors, dusts, fibers, and other hazardous materials may be, or are not, present. Requirements for all types include the need for training in their safe operation, and assorted traveling regulations (authorized speed, protection of pedestrians, behavior at cross-aisles, proper parking, etc.).

The most commonly used truck across the most industries is the forklift or fork truck, so here are some of the most important do's and don'ts for their operators:

- Check your machine thoroughly before starting it (report any malfunctions so that they can be taken care of before use of the vehicle).
- Know the load limits of the surface you'll be driving on and the rated capacity of your truck--and never carry a load that exceeds either.
- Observe the speed limit and appropriate stops at intersections.
- Never engage in horseplay or "hotdogging," and never allow anyone else to ride with you.
- Be sure your view is not obstructed.
- Travel with the fork or pallet only 4-6 inches off the floor, and never raise or lower the load while traveling.
- When you must park your truck, don't let it block a doorway, aisle, or piece of emergency equipment; don't leave the forks in a raised position.
- When you leave the truck, even if only for a minute or so, set the brakes, leave the controls in neutral, shut off the power, and remove the keys.

Your organization will see to it that you are given appropriate training and refreshers, and will establish in-house "rules of the road," operating and maintenance schedules, and instructions for refueling.