



PREVENTING INJURIES FROM FALLING OBJECTS

Objects falling from above and striking people below have caused serious industrial injuries and account for a number of fatalities every year. Although the exact number of "falling object" injuries is difficult to determine, documents produced in several recent court cases suggest that the practice of "high stacking" materials and supplies poses a serious safety threat to those below.

Provide Adequate Warning - Workers or customers below depend on those working above for their safety. If you're going to be doing work overhead, warn those in the area either verbally or with signs, ropes or barricades. For those below, it's their responsibility to be aware of the work being done overhead and observe the warnings and barricades.

Secure the Load - If you'll be lifting a load to a higher level, make sure the load is balanced and secured so it won't slip off. Restraints such as nylon strapping bands can be used to secure overhead goods. In some cases, merchandise to be stacked on top of racks can be shrink-wrapped in plastic to provide stability and keep loose boxes and other items from falling. If using plastic wrap remember that the plastic may stretch due to the high heat at the top of the racks and may cause the load to shift. Another safety precaution is to provide netting on stored items or restraining bars to keep the load in place. If you're placing a load on a scaffold or platform, make sure there are guard rails or toe boards to prevent material from fall off.

Moving A Load - Never lift, lower or swing a load over anyone's head! Block off areas where loads are being lifted or lowered. Have a "spotter" in the adjoining aisle where items might be pushed off racks or platforms during moving or stacking of materials. If possible, restrict these stacking and heavy moving operations to hours when fewer people are present.

Practice Good Housekeeping - Keep tools and other materials away from edges and off of railings or sills. Stack them on a flat surface; crosstie or cover them, if necessary, to keep them in place. If you're working overhead, watch that you don't kick, throw or sweep material off that could fall on anyone below. Whenever there's a risk of falling objects at a worksite, an employer is required to provide protection for workers and visitors to the site. Hard hats and safety shoes are examples of personal protection against falling objects.