

Loading Dock Safety

Serious injuries can occur when employees fall from loading docks. Additional hazards include forklifts, dock plates, steps and unsecured trucks. Winter and wet weather create slick floors. While a loading dock is an important utility infrastructure commonly found in commercial and industrial buildings, it can be a potentially dangerous place for anyone that works on or around the area.



Loading docks present a myriad of hazards for employees. Serious injuries can happen on the dock. All of the equipment used on the loading dock is BIG and HEAVY like forklifts and big rigs. Not to mention the overhead obstructions, wet floors from rain and poor lighting when working inside the trailers. It can be said that the loading dock could be one of the most dangerous areas of a facility. Below are tips and reminders for safely working on or around Loading Docks.

DOCK LEVELERS / CROSS PLATES

- Know the dock plate capacity.
- Routinely inspect dock levelers for hazards.
- Keep dock leveler wells clear of trash / waste.
- Keep dock levelers adjusted.
- When a trailer is backed into position, the dock leveler must cross completely into the trailer.
- Never work beneath a raised dock leveler without blocking and bracing it.
- Return dock levelers to the cradle before allowing the trailer / truck to leave.

SEMI TRUCKS AND TRAILERS

- Semi-trucks and trailers can “creep” forward when forklifts are moving in and out.
- Always chock tires of semi-trailers.
- When a trailer is dropped (the tractor has left) always use a kingpin plate jack stand.
- Kingpin plate jack stands, combined with the trailer landing legs, prevent the trailer from tipping forward during loading / offloading.
- Inspect the trailer floor before moving out on it with a forklift.
- Pedestrians are not allowed in trailers during forklift unloading.

LOADING DOCK BEST PRACTICES

- Never “dock jump” - knee injury could result.
- Never climb into a dock door as a fall could lead to serious injury.
- Keep dock doors closed to prevent falls and increase security.
- If dock doors must stay open for ventilation purposes, provide a guardrail system to prevent accidental fall.
- Keep dock floors dry - clean up spills or tracked rain water immediately.
- If drivers enter the facility, keep an eye out for them - ensure their safety and security.
- Make sure forklift spot lights function.
- Make sure trailer lights function to light the insides of dark trailers.
- When loading/offloading straight trucks, use a pallet jack instead of a forklift - straight trucks may not handle the weight of a forklift.
- Keep dock areas and stairs free of snow/ice.
- Do not smoke on the loading dock.
- Keep floors clear of trip hazards like trash, plastic strapping and shrink wrap.

Loading dock safety involves everyone. Start and end your day safely by exercising caution when working on Loading Docks! And remember, we all work to live.

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