

# Warehouse Safety



Warehouse accidents are rare, but when they happen, they can be devastating - not only for the individual, but also for the company. In today's business world, it is important to be safety-conscious in your warehouse design and have the best safety programs in place.

Following are [IWS West, Inc.](#) recommendations for optimal warehouse design and safety.

## Sizing

It is fundamental to have the warehouse system sized around the product dimensions in order to provide a system that allows a product to be quickly and safely picked or replenished.

Primary areas of importance:

- Aisle Width
- Lift Off Clear Space
- Transverse Flue Space
- Longitudinal Flue Space
- Clear Ceiling Height
- Warehouse Obstructions (Building Columns, Lights, Electrical, etc.)



## Engineering

Engineering is required for every warehouse system. Based on the weight of your product and the thickness of your slab, an engineer will determine the size and gauge of the uprights and beams, number and size of the anchor bolts, and number of row spacers.

Primary Areas of Importance:

- Structural compliance with city
- Prevent suppliers from undersizing the system for a competitive advantage
- Ensure system can safely support product

## Proper Training

From driving a forklift to picking parts to a conveyor system, it's critical that employees not only be trained, but certified in certain warehouse job functions. There are many companies that can come to your facility for certification training.

### Primary Areas of Importance:

- Forklift operators should be certified for each specific type of forklift
- Pedestrian traffic: Pedestrians stay in designated walkways and clear of forklift traffic
- Equipment meets all required standards and/or codes and is in good working order; keep it locked out if concerns arise
- Have a safety program in place and make sure it is being utilized



**Below are some of the most common scenarios in warehouse accidents, and some steps that may help in preventing them.**

- *Forklift operator pulls the beam out of the level above while removing a pallet.*
  - Even though all beams are required to have safety clips, if a beam is pushed up and out from below, a defective safety clip can fail. Making sure there is plenty of room from the top of the pallet to the bottom of the next beam can prevent this. Six inches of clearance is standard in the industry. For added safety, some companies choose to put a through bolt into the beam and upright.
- *Pallets falling in between the load beams.*
  - At higher levels, it can be difficult for the forklift operator to see that the pallet is properly resting on the front and back load beam. It is standard to have three inches of pallet overhang on the back and front beam. If the pallet is 48 inches deep, then using a 42 inch upright will provide the right depth for this scenario. For an additional level of safety, companies sometimes add front to back pallet supports or wire decks in every location.

### *Pick and Replenishing Conflicts*

- Scheduling pick and replenishing at different times avoids conflicts; Replenishers are almost always on equipment, and picking can sometimes be on foot. Even so, having the two focused on different tasks can lead to the two coming in contact. Product can also be knocked free from pallets during replenishment. If the business demands that the two work in the same area, making sure pickers give the replenisher plenty of space is a good safety rule to implement. For added safety, some companies always shrink wrap a pallet before it goes in the racking system, and add safety netting on single rows where employees are working or walking on the other side.
- *Pulls and Strains*
  - Although catastrophic injuries are uncommon, minor pulls and strains are not. This is not surprising considering the work that is involved. Safety training and certification play a big part in assuring that employees understand how to lift and put away product.

In the last 10 years there have been products introduced to assist in lifting and placing product. Depending on the task, there may be equipment that can reduce the strain of a specific task. Slotting product based on its weight and velocity will insure the heavier product and fastest movers will be located at a waist high position. Minimizing the range of motion during the task, can not only save time, but prevent additional strain on the body.

One of the easiest steps that can be taken against pulls and strains is to observe your employees as they arrive for their shift. Watch for mental or physical changes, and be sure to ask if you notice anything different. Be proactive – putting an employee on modified duty for the day will be a lot less expensive than a trip to urgent care.

If you have safety concerns with your warehouse design or equipment, [IWS West, Inc.](#) would be happy to schedule a visit and evaluate your concern.