

Introduction

A pallet jack may not be the most hazardous piece of equipment in your workplace. But its simple appearance can be dangerously deceiving. Manual pallet jacks have been the culprit behind crushed toes, scraped knuckles and pulled backs. Improperly stored and these devices also pose tripping hazards. If your facility uses pallet jacks, share these safety tips with your workers.



Wear Proper PPE

Workers who work with pallet jacks need to wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including:

- Safety-toed footwear to prevent foot injuries caused by being run over by the wheels, being hit by materials falling from the jack or stubbing a toe on the jack;
- Gloves to reduce the risk of cuts, bruises and blisters;
- Safety eyewear to prevent injuries from material strapping and hazardous chemicals being moved; and
- Hardhat when placing loads at or above head level.

Maintain the Pallet Jacks

After a while, the solid rubber wheels of pallet jacks can develop wear, resulting in unstable loads and poor handling. In turn, workers can experience stress to the hands and arms because of difficulty steering and stopping the device.

Periodic maintenance of pallet jacks will enable workers to operate the devices with the minimum amount of hand, arm and finger force.

Maintain the Pallets Too

Keeping your pallets in good condition may sound trivial, but it's not. Using a damaged or defective pallet can have serious consequences. For example, it can cause a load to shift and fall, resulting in injury. It's important to inspect pallets before using them.

Follow these Safe Handling Guidelines

Here are some tips for workers to keep in mind when using a pallet jack:

- Check the pallet jack for damage, bent forks etc.;
- Check the floor for ruts, bumps and other imperfections before moving the pallet jack;
- Never place your feet under a pallet jack;
- If your view is obstructed, have a co-worker guide the load;

- Never exceed a pallet jack's load capacity;
- Lower the load of a high lift pallet jack when moving from one location to the next;
- Don't use a pallet jack for human transportation, i.e. no horseplay;
- When going down an incline, push, don't pull;
- Considering having someone assist you pulling and/or pushing the jack when the load is heavy, it is being pulled across a wet floor, or is on any type of grade;
- Stick to correct traffic lanes, and be alert to avoid collisions around corners;
- Swing wide on corners to avoid striking something, like: door frames, racking, etc.
- Be aware of pinch point hazards to your hands;
- Use proper lifting techniques when loading and unloading;
- Make sure the pallet jack is in the down position before releasing the handle; and
- Always let the pallet jack down when stocking product or anytime the jack is left unattended;

Operation

Hand pallet trucks have a simple raise/neutral/lower operating method. To raise the forks, push the actuating lever down and pump the handle up and down until the pallet has reached the desired height. A clearance of one inch between the floor and pallet is usually sufficient to move the load. To move a load, engage the actuating lever in a neutral or middle position.

This position disengages the lifting mechanism, making the handle free from hydraulic resistance, and the forks remain in the raised position. Lower the forks by pulling the actuating lever past the neutral position. Because the lever is spring-loaded for lowering, when you release the lever it will automatically return to the neutral position.

Store Properly

When not in use, store pallet jacks where they will not create tripping hazards. And make sure that the devices do not block exits or emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers.

Other Information

Pallet Jack Safety

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWEJKJITmGE>

Work Safely: Lifting in the warehouse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3-5DPWQlj8>