

Handling Materials—General

Description:

The OSHA general materials handling standard is directed to preventing employee injury in areas such as shops, warehouses, rail car sidings or spurs, and general storage areas.

Regulatory Reference

29 CFR Part 1910 Subpart N Materials Handling and Storage

29 CFR §1910.176 Handling materials—general

Applies to:

General materials handling requirements apply to employees who move, lift, lower, stack, bin, or otherwise handle materials in storage or other work area.

General Requirements:

- (a) *Use of mechanical equipment.* Where mechanical handling equipment is used, sufficient safe clearances shall be allowed for aisles, at loading docks, through doorways and wherever turns or passage must be made. Aisles and passageways shall be kept clear and in good repair, with no obstruction across or in aisles that could create a hazard. Permanent aisles and passageways shall be appropriately marked.
- (b) *Secure storage.* Storage of material shall not create a hazard. Bags, containers, bundles, etc., stored in tiers shall be stacked, blocked, interlocked and limited in height so that they are stable and secure against sliding or collapse.
- (c) *Housekeeping.* Storage areas shall be kept free from accumulation of materials that constitute hazards from tripping, fire, explosion, or pest harborage. Vegetation control will be exercised when necessary.
- (d) *Clearance limits.* Clearance signs to warn of clearance limits shall be provided.
- (e) *Rolling railroad cars.* Derail and/or bumper blocks shall be provided on spur railroad tracks where a rolling car could contact other cars being worked, enter a building, work or traffic area.
- (f) *Guarding.* Covers and/or guard-rails shall be provided to protect personnel from the hazards of open pits, tanks, vats, ditches, etc.

Training Requirements:

No employee training requirements are specified in the standard.

Maintenance and Review

Requirements of the general materials handling standard should be reviewed and incorporated at appropriate points in any facility inspections and related company standard operating procedures (SOPs) or workplace rules.

Examples of Typical Violations:

1. Housekeeping violations including accumulated trash and potential combustible materials
2. Unstable stacking and binning of materials that present a hazard of employees being struck by falling objects
3. Blockage of aisle and access ways that would interfere with emergency evacuation
4. Lack of toe plates on overhead storage areas that present falling object hazards
5. Absence of guardrails or other employee protection that present trip or fall hazards
6. Lack of adequate railcar blocks

Additional Information and Resources

Related requirements for materials handling of 29 CFR Subpart N that also affect typical propane operations can be found in other OSHA compliance guides in Section 2 of this reference, and include:

- 29 CFR §1910.177 Servicing multi-piece and single piece rim wheels
- 29 CFR §1910.178 Powered industrial trucks
- 29 CFR §1910.180 Crawler locomotive and truck cranes
- 29 CFR §1910.181 Derricks
- 29 CFR §1910.184 Slings