

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

"WAREHOUSE SAFETY"

Part of the General Safety Series

OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS

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The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the program. The outline can be used to review the program before conducting a classroom session, as well as in preparing to lead a class discussion about the program.

- **Warehouses play a critical role in our economy.**
 - They are the hubs of the transportation, storage and distribution of all types of materials, and help keep business and industry going strong.

- **As a result, they are very busy places, which can give rise to a lot of hazardous situations.**
 - Every year, thousands of warehouse workers are injured on the job.
 - And there are more fatalities in warehouses than in most other workplaces as well.
 - But it doesn't have to be that way.

- **Warehouse safety depends on you understanding the work-related risks you're subject to, and knowing how to avoid them.**
 - Let's face it, ignoring the risks in warehouse work will not make them go away.

- **To protect yourself against accidents, you need to meet warehouse hazards "head on".**
 - You do that best by being "safety minded".

- **A good way to start is "dressing for safety" every day, with personal protective equipment (PPE).**

- **PPE is anything you can wear to prevent or minimize injury, such as:**
 - Leather gloves.
 - A hardhat.
 - Safety glasses.
 - Steel-toed boots.
 - Ear protection.
 - A dust mask.

- **But PPE can't protect you if it's sitting on the shelf, so be sure to put it on.**
 - Check that it's in good condition.
 - If it fails inspection, take it out of service.
- **It's especially important to stay "safety minded" when we're busy or in a hurry, because that's when we often take more risks.**
 - Remember to walk, don't run.
 - Watch where you're going.
 - Hand materials and tools to your coworkers... don't throw them.
- **Don't ever fool around in a warehouse.**
 - You need to take safety seriously.
 - Horseplay can get somebody seriously hurt.
- **"Good housekeeping" might not seem like a priority in a warehouse, but clutter can be dangerous.**
- **Rubbish on the floor can cause slips, trips, and falls, interfere with safe operation of equipment, even create a fire hazard.**
 - Dispose of trash immediately in the proper containers.
 - Clean up or report all liquid spills right away, before they can cause a slip or a "skid".
 - Always report any loose flooring or other conditions that could cause trouble.
- **Good housekeeping also includes not creating unsafe situations.**
 - Don't park a load or leave pallets where people don't expect them to be, even "temporarily" (that's an accident just waiting to happen).
- **"Safety mindedness" is also very important when you're dealing with hazardous materials.**
 - Your employer will provide you with information and training on safe handling and storage of these substances in your Hazard Communication sessions.

- **HAZCOM information includes:**
 - What PPE you should use when you're handling a hazardous material.
 - What to do in case of a HAZMAT spill.
 - What first aid treatment to give someone if they're exposed to a hazardous material.
 - You can also find this information in a material's Safety Data Sheet (SDS).
- **Most warehouse work is "materials handling," and focusing on some basic principles can help you do it safely.**
- **A lot of lifting and carrying gets done in a warehouse, and lots of workers suffer back pain and other injuries as a result.**
 - But this doesn't have to happen, especially if you think before you lift.
- **Begin by asking:**
 - Is the load too heavy to lift easily by myself?
 - Is it too bulky for me to see where I'm going after I lift it?
 - Is it too awkward or unbalanced for me to carry safely by myself?
- **If you have any doubts about the answers, don't make the lift alone.**
 - Ask a coworker to give you a hand.
- **When you do decide to make a lift yourself, lift safely.**
 - Keep your back straight (never bend at the waist).
 - Get close to the object and lower yourself by bending your knees.
 - Grip the item firmly, tight to your body.
 - Then lift using your leg muscles.

- **Once you've picked something up you have to get it to where it needs to go.**
 - Carrying a load safely means watching where you're going and stepping carefully, while still keeping your back straight.
 - Don't twist your body when you need to make a turn (change direction by moving your feet).

- **When it's time to "unload", do what you did when you lifted, but do it in reverse.**

- **You can make any materials handling task safer when you take time for a little "preparation".**
 - First, look at the load and decide on the best way to move it.
 - If it's on a pallet, use a pallet jack, a pallet truck or get someone with a forklift to help you.
 - For smaller items, a dolly or hand-truck might be the best approach.
 - If it's just one reasonably lightweight item, you could decide to lift and carry it yourself.

- **"Preparation" also includes planning the route you'll follow to get your load to its destination.**
 - The goal is to get there quickly and safely.
 - Scope it out for yourself.
 - If you find obstacles along the way, remove them or find an alternate route.
 - Remember to make sure there's a place to put the load once you get where you're going!

- **It's also important to make sure that the equipment that you're using in your warehouse is working correctly.**
 - Always inspect materials handling equipment before you use it.
 - Check its mechanical condition, and make sure that it's rated to handle the required weight as well ("overloading" can be very dangerous).

- **How you load the equipment is important, too.**
 - Load with stability in mind... loosely stacked or unbalanced loads can slip off and cause havoc.
 - Keep the center of gravity low.
 - Place heavier and larger items near the bottom.
 - Place lighter and smaller ones near the top.

- **To prevent any unbalanced or awkwardly-shaped items from getting out of control make sure to secure them before moving out.**
 - Strapping or stretch-wrap can be useful here.

- **Moving, storing and stacking materials would be a lot tougher without pallets... but they do have some hazards of their own.**
 - You need to know how to work safely with them.

- **Pallets can often have sharp edges, splinters or protruding nails.**
 - Always inspect them closely.
 - PPE really comes in "handy" here.
 - Wear sturdy gloves whenever you're handling pallets.

- **If you find a damaged pallet, scrap it.**
 - Its condition will only get worse over time, and become more hazardous for everyone.

- **Walking or standing on pallets is risky.**
 - They can easily shift as you move across them.
 - If your foot slips through a gap in the boards you can end up with a twist, a sprain or even a break.
 - Stay off them whenever possible.
 - If you have to walk or stand on a pallet, be very careful.

- **Pallets can be heavier than they look, and they're awkward to lift.**
 - When possible, get an assist from a coworker when handling them.

- **Always stack empty pallets flat, and never more than about four feet high.**
 - That way they're easier to handle, and the stack is less likely to tip over.
 - Never stand pallets on their sides... in that position they can easily fall over and damage something or somebody.

- **Materials that have been stacked on a pallet ("palletized") can be much more convenient to store.**
 - But remember, doing it safely means not creating any new hazards in the process.
 - Begin by checking whether the materials require a special environment, such as a very dry, dark or well-ventilated area.
 - Find out if storing them with any other materials could create a dangerous condition.

- **This is particularly important with chemicals and other HAZMATs.**
 - You can find information on safe storage on a material's Safety Data Sheet, or check with your supervisor.

- **How you stack materials is crucial to warehouse safety.**
 - With the quantities and weights that can be involved, they can be lethal if they collapse or tip over.
 - You can help prevent this by stacking all materials on a flat base.
 - Place the larger and heavier objects close to the floor, and the lighter and smaller objects higher up.
 - Stack containers straight and evenly.

- **Don't stack items so high that they touch overhead lights or pipes.**
 - You must leave at least 18 inches of clearance between stacked materials and sprinkler heads.

- **Never store or stack materials in front of exits or safety equipment.**
 - Don't obstruct aisles, passageways or evacuation routes.

- **If you're breaking up materials that have already been palletized, you need to be careful as well.**
 - "Strapping" can be very tight, and can spring out at you when you cut it.
 - Watch out for materials that haven't been stacked well on the pallet... they could fall apart when strapping or stretch wrap is removed.
- **Forklifts are designed to handle large quantities of materials quickly and efficiently.**
 - But they can also pose significant hazards to employees who may be working nearby.
- **Forklift operators are trained professionals.**
 - They know their equipment and how to use it safely.
 - They know the "rules of the road".
- **It's true that forklift operators are supposed to yield to pedestrians.**
 - But safety is a two-way street.
 - You need to work with the drivers to ensure that accidents don't occur.
- **It's up to you to make sure the forklift operator knows you're there.**
 - The noise of a forklift itself can often prevent drivers from hearing you.
 - Sometimes the load that they're carrying can obscure their vision.
- **Use designated pedestrian walkways whenever possible, and keep to the right when walking in aisles.**
 - You don't want to "pop up" where a driver doesn't expect you.

- **Stop, look and listen for forklifts, especially near blind corners and intersections.**
 - They can be trouble spots in a warehouse just like they are on city streets.
 - Forklift operators should honk their horns at these locations.
 - You can add an extra margin of safety by being alert and cautious in these areas.
 - If your workplace has installed convex mirrors to help you see around corners, use them.
- **Forklifts can move strangely, too.**
 - They steer with their rear wheels, so they can maneuver better in tight spaces.
 - They can turn very sharply, and their back end swings out when they do (don't let this catch you by surprise).
- **The bottom line with forklifts is... to stay safe, stay clear of them.**
 - Always stay away from their forks.
 - Never get between a forklift and a wall.
 - Never work, stand or walk under a raised load.
- **Forklifts are for moving materials, not people.**
 - No one but the operator should ever ride on a forklift.
- **A loading dock is a very busy place.**
 - It's also where one in four warehouse accidents occur.
 - Loading dock injuries tend to be serious, and they can be fatal.
- **Something that can make a loading dock particularly hazardous is the weather.**
 - Rain, snow and ice increase the risk of slips and falls on a dock.
 - In these conditions, you need to watch your footing.
 - Keep the dock surface as dry as possible.
 - Don't let snow or ice accumulate on the floor.

- **While you can stay well clear of forklifts elsewhere in a warehouse, a crowded loading dock can require you to work at close quarters with them.**
 - You need to be extra careful when they're around.
- **Crowding can also force you closer to unguarded edges of the dock than you should be.**
 - This is especially risky when there's no truck backed up to the dock.
 - It can be a long way down.
 - That's why jumping on or off of a loading dock is a bad idea, too.
 - Use the stairs or a ladder.
- **"Dock plates" can make your job safer by bridging the gap between the loading dock and a truck or trailer... but they need to be used properly to be effective.**
 - A dock plate must be rated to support the total weight of the load you're handling, which includes the weight of any equipment that's moving it.
 - To be secure, dock plates must be positioned with at least 8 inches of overlap on both ends.
- **Just the act of unloading a truck or trailer can have its own set of hazards.**
 - For instance, the load inside may have shifted during transit.
 - That means materials could come tumbling out at you when you open the doors.
 - Avoid possible falling objects by standing clear.
- **Sometimes loading or unloading can cause a truck or trailer to gradually roll away from the loading dock.**
 - It's called "trailer creep" and it can be deadly if people and equipment fall into the resulting gap.
- **To prevent it from moving, any truck parked at the dock should have its engine turned off, its transmission in reverse, and its parking brake applied.**
 - To be doubly safe, chock the wheels as well.
 - Keep an eye on the chocks... sometimes the activity in the truck can loosen them, too.

- **If your loading dock has mechanical trailer-restraint devices that lock onto a truck's axel or frame, be sure to use them.**

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- **Taking safety seriously begins with basics, like wearing the right PPE and keeping your work area clean and orderly.**
- **Think before you handle materials. Decide how to move them, check out your route, and lift and load with care.**
- **Treat pallets with respect. Know how to store and stack materials safely and securely.**
- **Work with forklift operators to prevent accidents. Stay clear of any powered equipment when it's moving.**
- **Watch your footing on a loading dock. Be careful of unguarded edges, forklifts at close quarters and "trailer creep".**
- **The risks involved in warehouse work are real. But now that you understand them, and know the steps you can take to avoid them, you can get your job done better and more safely... every day!**