

# The most **dangerous** areas of your warehouse (and how to make them safer)



The warehouse can be a dangerous—even deadly—place to work, with potential hazards ranging from unsafe forklift operation to improper stacking of products. Here’s a look at some of the common danger zones—and a few tips for reducing the hazards.

## 10 most frequent causes of OSHA warehouse citations

Warehouse operations present a wide variety of hazards to workers, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). What are the biggest danger areas? The agency says the most frequent offenses involve violations of the following OSHA standards:

1. Forklifts
2. Hazard communication
3. Electrical - wiring methods
4. Electrical - system design
5. Guarding floor and wall openings and holes
6. Exits
7. Mechanical power transmission
8. Respiratory protection
9. Lockout/tagout (systems for disabling equipment in an emergency)
10. Portable fire extinguishers

Source: [www.osha.gov/Publications/warehousing.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/warehousing.html)



## Conveyors/Sorters

- Make sure “lockout/tagout” systems are in place so that workers can quickly shut down equipment in an emergency. (For more info, see OSHA’s “Lockout/Tagout” Fact Sheet at [https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data\\_General\\_Facts/factsheet-lockout-tagout.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/factsheet-lockout-tagout.pdf).)

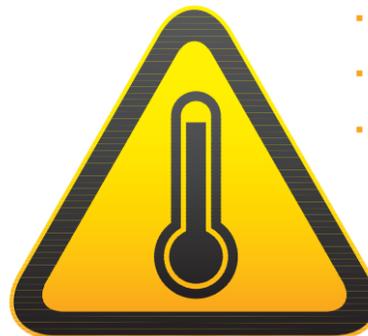
## Floors/General

- Mark floors to show pedestrian lanes where lift trucks are not allowed to travel. Color coding the markings (e.g., yellow to mark pathways; white for storage areas; red and white to indicate safety hazards) is helpful, though not required by OSHA.
- Use signage to mark emergency exits, tornado shelters, exit routes, rendezvous points, eyewash stations, etc.
- Clean spills immediately so people and/or lift trucks don’t slip.



## Racks and shelving

- Use racks rather than stacking product on floors to prevent items from falling on workers or mobile equipment.
- Check the specs to make sure your storage units can handle the weight and size of products assigned to them.
- Prevent rack “push-through”—where product is pushed past the shelving’s frame—with safety straps or nets.



## Mezzanines

- Install safety gates to reduce the chance of people or products falling.
- Make sure the structure is surrounded by guardrails that meet OSHA requirements.
- Use fans to keep the temperature down. Temperatures can be 20 or 30 degrees higher on mezzanines than on the floor. (See “Heat wave,” *DC VELOCITY*, November 2015.)

## Docks

- Use vehicle restraints to keep trailers locked to the docks.
- Invest in indicator systems that use lights to signal when it’s safe for trailers to pull away from the dock and when it’s safe for workers to load or unload the vehicle.
- Install dock plates and levelers to reduce vibration for workers moving freight into and out of trailers. Make sure dock plates are secure and can safely support loads.
- Provide adequate lighting inside trailers.
- Pull gates across open dock doors when trailers are not present.



## Packing areas

- Use ergonomic mats for workers who must stand for long periods.
- Position tables to avoid unnecessary bending and stretching by workers.
- Make use of overhead hoists to pack heavy products.
- Make sure safety cages surround automatic packing machines, stretch wrappers, robotics, and automated storage.



## Lift trucks

- Use hoists or automatic changers in battery changing areas. These prevent batteries from falling onto workers’ feet.
- Have wash stations available in case of acid spills.

