

Forklift procedures for storage racking*



Forklifts are used to load and unload products into storage racking aka pallet racking. Typically, the loads are put onto pallets and placed onto the storage racking. The pallet may land on a shelf in the storage rack supported by crossbars and horizontal (pallet) beams or be placed on the horizontal beams with no shelf.

Why is it important?

Storage racking is only designed to support a specific rated capacity of load and certain design of pallets. Using the wrong pallet or exceeding the rated capacity can cause damage and possibly cause the storage racking to collapse.



Associated risks/hazards

- Exceeding the rated capacity for a shelf may cause the shelf and possibly the horizontal beam to deform. This will make it difficult to properly remove pallets from the shelf.
- Exceeding the rated capacity may also cause a structural failure of the storage racking.
- Using the wrong style or size of pallet may cause the pallet and/or product to fall off the storage racking.

Preventive next steps

1. Follow Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) section 4.43.1 requirements for storage racking. This includes installation requirements, instructions for loading and unloading, rated capacity markings, inspection requirements, etc.
2. Before placing loads into storage racking, ensure the pallet is not defective and ensure the pallet is the correct size and style for the storage racking. For example, you do not want to put a 2-foot by 2-foot pallet on a wire mesh shelf that does not have adequate cross bar support. Instead use a 4-foot by 4-foot pallet that can be supported by the shelf and the horizontal beams.

3. On storage racking without a shelf ensure the pallet is the correct size and style which will rest completely on both horizontal beams.
4. The following is a generic procedure for loading and unload pallets from storage racking:
 - Know the capacity of the storage rack and the weight of your load
 - Make sure the load is secured e.g., shrink wrap loose items
 - Watch out for protruding objects when loading and unloading a pallet
 - Bring the pallet in and out of the storage racking level
 - When placing a pallet, make sure you do NOT push the load behind it out of the storage racking
 - Never let anyone walk under your forks while loading and unloading a pallet
 - Make sure the pallet is clear of the storage racking before lowering it; if you cannot see what you are doing, get a spotter
 - If you damage the storage racking, report it immediately



For additional resources visit:

[Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 4.43.1 Storage Racks](#) | WorkSafeBC

[Working safely with pallet racking systems](#) | WorkSafe New Zealand website

