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**National Institutes of Health  
Office of Research Services  
Division of Occupational  
Health and Safety**

Providing a safe and healthy environment for employees, patients and visitors.

*“Safe science and good science go hand-in-hand.”*

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**Staying safe in the warehouse**

It might look neat and tidy, and it might be quiet at times, but warehouse operations expose workers to numerous hazards.

There's no single Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard on safe warehouse operations, but several standards address the following potential hazards for workers in warehousing:

- Inadequate fire safety and emergency evacuation provisions;
- Unsafe use of forklifts;
- Unsafe material handling and storage procedures; and
- Failure to use proper personal protective equipment.



**Fire safety and emergency evacuation**

You need to be prepared in case of a fire and for emergency evacuations. To be prepared:

- Know your role in the facility's emergency action plan, including how to report a fire and evacuate safely;
- Be able to recognize alarm signals;
- Know where the exits and safe assembly areas are located;

- Keep floors and aisles clear of clutter; and
- Never block access to fire extinguishers, pull alarms, exits, and other emergency equipment.

If you're trained and designated to use fire extinguishers, know their locations and how to use them safely.

**Forklift safety**

The powered industrial truck is a common piece of equipment in warehouses. If you operate a forklift, you must be trained and evaluated to ensure you can safely operate them. In addition, forklift operators must:

- Inspect the forklift for hazardous conditions before use that would make it unsafe to operate. Never use a defective forklift.
- Wear a seatbelt in sit-down rider forklifts.
- Follow safe procedures for picking up, putting down, and stacking loads. Only handle loads that are within the forklift's capacity limits.
- Drive slowly, especially in congested areas or on wet, slippery surfaces.
- Never drive up to a person standing in front of a fixed object such as a wall or stacked materials. Stunt driving and horseplay are prohibited.
- Keep concentrations of combustion byproducts from engine exhaust at a safe level.

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# Staying safe in the warehouse *(continued from page 1)*

Use opened doors, windows, or a ventilation system to ensure there is adequate fresh air.

## Conveyors and lifting equipment

A forklift isn't the only type of equipment used to handle materials. To prevent injuries in areas where conveyors are used:

- Inspect conveyors regularly, and keep them in good repair;
- Don't remove the machine guards before servicing;
- Lock out the equipment before servicing;
- Know how to operate emergency stop controls;
- Make sure there is adequate lighting and keep the aisles clear in the area around the conveyor; and
- Never stand or ride on a materials-handling conveyor.



When using lifting equipment such as overhead cranes or hoists:

- Inspect it frequently and keep it in good repair. Remove damaged or defective equipment from service;
- Plan each lift and check the equipment's capacity to ensure it isn't overloaded;
- Attach loads using slings or other appropriate equipment rated for the load's weight; and
- Remain clear of loads about to be lifted and suspended.

## Manual lifting

If possible, use powered equipment instead of lifting manually. If you must lift:

- Try to reposition shelves or bins to reduce overhead lifts and lifts from the floor;
- Test the load to estimate its weight, size, and bulk before you lift;
- Use your legs and keep your back as straight as possible while lifting;
- Get help for heavy, large, or bulky loads;
- Don't twist while carrying a load, but shift your feet and take small steps in the direction you want to turn; and
- Take periodic rest breaks if you must do repetitive lifting.

## Loading docks

Injuries happen at loading docks when forklifts run off the dock, products fall on employees, or material handling

equipment strikes a worker. Employers can help prevent injuries by installing guardrails at loading dock doors and other areas open to drops of four feet or more. If you operate a forklift, you should:

- Drive forklifts slowly on docks and dock plates;
- Secure dock plates and check to see if the plate can safely support the load;
- Keep clear of dock edges and never back up forklifts to the dock's edge; and
- Provide visual warnings near dock edges.

## Proper storage

Proper storage ensures materials are both organized and safe. When you store materials:

- Make sure the stacks are even, straight, stable, and self-supporting;
- Stack materials to an appropriate height; observe height limitations (maintain 18 inches of clearance below sprinkler heads);
- Place heavier loads on lower shelves; and
- Remove one object at a time from shelves.

## Chemical storage

Take the following extra precautions when storing chemicals to help prevent leaks, spills, fires, and chemical reactions:

- Make sure all hazardous materials containers are properly labeled;
- Check that there is a safety data sheet (SDS) available for each incoming chemical;
- Store chemicals according to the manufacturer's recommendations and local fire codes;
- Separate incompatible materials; and
- Know how to report leaks and spills.

## Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Sometimes you'll need to wear PPE. For example, wear:

- Gloves and long sleeves when handling loads with sharp or rough edges;
- Eye protection when using tools, when working in windy or dusty areas, or when reaching up to work overhead;
- Steel-toed safety shoes or boots when objects could fall or roll onto your feet;
- Metatarsal guards to protect the top of your foot (instep area) from impact or compression; and
- A hard hat if objects might fall from above or you might bump your head against fixed objects.

# Safety focus: Road rage

Road rage continues to be a serious issue on our nation's roadways. Becoming aware of the problem and learning ways to address it can help drivers deal with this potentially dangerous issue.

## Definitions

**Road rage** is commonly defined as a motorist losing his/her temper in reaction to a traffic situation or disturbance. Road rage includes aggressive, angry, and in some cases, violent behavior exhibited by a driver in traffic.

**Aggressive driving** is behavior that endangers or is likely to endanger people or property. Aggressive driving includes behavior ranging from risky driving to violence on the road.



Dangerous behavior by an aggressive driver and/or a driver exhibiting road rage can include:

- Speeding;
- Tailgating;
- Failing to yield;
- Running stop signs;
- Weaving in and out of traffic;
- Making improper or unsafe lane changes;
- Passing on the right;
- Cutting off other drivers;
- Misuse/overuse of the vehicle's horn;
- Screaming;
- Making hand and facial gestures; and
- Flashing the vehicle's lights.

## What causes road rage?

So, what causes road rage? Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size fits all answer.

Anything from a simple misunderstanding between drivers to stress and frustration caused by something unrelated to the road, such as stress at work or in the home, can trigger road rage.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) lists three factors as links to road rage:

- An increase in travel and congestion (especially in urban areas);
- A lack of responsible driving behavior; and
- Reduced levels of traffic enforcement.

## Preventing road rage

Good manners and keeping a level head can help in preventing road rage. Remember, the consequences of reacting to someone's aggressive driving or road rage can be dangerous or worse yet, deadly. Also, keep in mind that negative actions could provoke other drivers.

Driving habits that may help prevent road rage include:

- Driving in the right lane on highways (except to pass);
- Not blocking the passing lane;
- Using directional when changing lanes;
- Allowing tailgaters to pass;
- Maintaining a safe following distance;
- Using high beam lights appropriately;
- Avoiding eye contact;
- Never returning gestures or engaging in a verbal argument; and
- Being polite and courteous.

The following are some tips to help keep you safe should you encounter an angry driver:

- Remain calm;
- Don't react to the angry driver's actions;
- Avoid making eye contact;
- Don't brake or accelerate suddenly; and
- Continue to follow safe driving practices.

If you believe you are being threatened, immediately notify law enforcement. When contacting law enforcement, provide the following information:

- Your location (including the direction you are traveling);
- A description of the driver; and
- A description of the driver's vehicle (including license plate number if possible).

Never stop in an isolated area. If you must stop, choose to do this at a law enforcement office, busy truck stop, or other public place.



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## More Americans are using illegal drugs

*"There is nothing permanent except change."*  
Heraclitus



**More than 10 percent of Americans use illegal drugs.**

Illegal drug use is on the rise – the most recent information from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows that more than 10 percent of Americans use illegal drugs.

That's higher than any year referenced by the survey, which contains data going back to 2002. That year, the report showed 8.3 of the population used illegal drugs.

The increase in illegal drug use is being seen across all age groups and is driven primarily by the use of marijuana. About 8 percent of Americans age 12 and older use marijuana, according to the survey.

The illegal use of prescription drugs continues to be a problem as well. Pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives fall into that category. Although illegal use of these drugs has fallen slightly since 2006, their use continues to be of concern.

An abuser of prescription medication may turn to heroin because it is cheaper and easier to obtain. Use of heroin doubled



between 2013 and 2014, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that heroin-related overdose deaths quadrupled between 2002 and 2013.

In addition to putting a person at risk for a deadly overdose, illegal drug use can cause brain, kidney, or liver damage. It also impacts a person's cardiovascular health.

Strategies for preventing drug abuse include education and treatment services, as well as community and family support.

Workers looking for drug abuse services can take advantage of employee assistance programs or community-based groups such as Narcotics Anonymous.

