



# Eye on Safety

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## Injury/Illness recordkeeping

Employers must keep records of work-related injuries and illnesses. An injury or illness is considered work-related if an event or exposure in the work environment caused or contributed to the condition or significantly aggravated a preexisting condition. Work-relatedness is presumed for injuries and illnesses resulting from events or exposures occurring in the workplace, unless an exception specifically applies. The work environment includes the establishment and other locations where one or more employees are working or are present as a condition of their employment.



Covered employers must record any work-related injury or illness resulting in one of the following:

- Death;
- Days away from work;
- Restricted work or transfer to another job;
- Medical treatment beyond first aid;
- Loss of consciousness; or
- Diagnosis of a significant injury/illness by a physician or other licensed health care professional.

The decision-making process consists of four steps:

1. Did the employee experience an injury or illness?
2. Is the injury or illness work-related?
3. Is the injury or illness a new case?
4. Does the injury or illness meet the general recording criteria or the application to specific cases?

If the answers to these four questions are “yes” the employer is to record the injury or illness.

### Why injuries and illnesses must be reported

Injury and illness recordkeeping is more than just government-required paperwork. The data collected through OSHA’s logs provides the company with information on

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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.”**

The articles in this Newsletter are intended to provide general summary information to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) community. They are not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. It is not NIH’s intention to provide specific advice to readers of this Newsletter, but rather general information to help better understand how to prevent or reduce workplace injuries and illnesses. Reference in this Newsletter to any specific commercial products, process, service, manufacturer, or company does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government or NIH. This is not an NIH publication.

# Injury/Illness recordkeeping *(continued from page 1)*

the number and types of injuries that are occurring, as well as potentially troublesome trends company-wide, department-wide, and job-wide. The data help OSHA address industry-wide trends.

To help the company identify and address safety concerns, you should:

- Always report work-related injuries and illnesses (and near misses, though those are not officially logged on OSHA forms) per company policy.
- Keep in mind that recording an injury or illness on the OSHA log does not necessarily imply that management was at fault, that the worker was at fault, or that a violation of an OSHA standard has occurred.
- Understand that an injury can be recordable under OSHA's recordkeeping system, but not compensable under workers' compensation law. And, vice-versa. Each have their own distinct criteria for whether the injury qualifies.
- Take the time to review the annual injury and illness summary, which will be posted in a common area at your company's workplace. The summary for the previous year must be posted from February 1 until April 30.



Remember, injuries can't be addressed if they aren't reported!

## What's on the summary

The employer must post an annual summary of the log of injuries and illnesses. The summary will tell you what types of recordable injuries and illnesses occurred during the last calendar year. It will NOT list employee names!

Specifically, it will tell you:

- Total number of each type of case (e.g., cases with days away, cases with job transfer, fatalities);
- Total number of days away from work, as well as total number of days of job transfer or restriction; and
- Total number of certain types of injuries/illnesses, e.g., skin disorders, respiratory conditions, poisonings, and hearing loss.

Employers must tell employees how to report injuries and illnesses, and employees have limited access to injury and illness records.

## Supervisor responsibilities

As a supervisor, you should be familiar with the posting, and where it's located, so that you know the types of injuries and illnesses that are occurring in the workplace and so that you can answer questions your workers may have.

Make sure you let everyone know about expectations that all employees report unsafe conditions or perceived risks. It is also important to recognize employees and crews for proactive safety actions.

### There's no injury. Why report it?

Near-misses will not appear on the Injury/Illness log, but it is still important to report them.

A near-miss incident on job sites is traditionally defined as an incident that leaves no injuries, no property or equipment damages, and also little or no evidence that it even occurred. As a result, a near-miss incident can be easily ignored. However, when reported and acted upon, near-misses enable early intervention, and are great opportunities to improve safety performance.

Many companies and workers resist near-miss reporting. Reasons for resistance include:

- Misunderstanding the meaning of a near-miss;
- Fear of punishment or retaliation for a near-miss report;
- Peer pressure and concern about record and reputation;
- The complexity and inconvenience of filling out a near-miss report;
- Lack of recognition and feedback; or
- An organization's desire to maintain the status quo.



It is important to develop a culture that does not wait until someone gets hurt to eliminate a hazard. Near-miss reporting can greatly improve safety performance.



# Safety focus: Pallet jack safety

“Powered” or “motorized” pallet jacks are valuable pieces of equipment that allow you to move loads quickly from point A to point B. Much like forklifts, motorized pallet jacks are some of the most common pieces of equipment in the workplace and, in fact, even outnumber forklifts in many workplaces.

Pallet jacks are more maneuverable than forklifts, which make them great at moving loads in tight spaces where a forklift would never fit. In addition, if the work requires frequent stops, they’re more convenient than a forklift because they’re designed to allow you to easily start and stop and walk away from the unit without having to unbuckle a seat belt.

Although they’re known by many different names, the two most common types are:

- **Walkies:** Can be operated as you walk either ahead of the pallet jack or behind it. They’re not designed to ride on.
- **Walkie-Riders:** Can be operated from the operator’s platform or from the floor.

Regardless of which type of motorized pallet jack you use, it’s important that you understand and master all the controls as well as use safe operating procedures every time. It doesn’t matter if you’re a new operator or an operator with years of experience, operating this equipment safely is your responsibility.

Don’t let a motorized pallet jack’s straightforward design and ease of operation fool you. Even though they have lower lift capacities and don’t perform the same “heavy duty functions that forklifts do, they can still be dangerous. Pallet jacks are often operated in tight spaces and in high-traffic areas with lots of pedestrians and equipment, and can cause serious injuries, and even death, if not operated properly and safely.

## Accidents

Every year operators are involved in thousands of accidents while using motorized pallet jacks. These accidents cause injuries to the operators or their coworkers and/or damage property and equipment. Many times these accidents are caused by operators who are untrained or unfamiliar with the operation of a specific model.

Common accidents that can occur while using motorized pallet jacks include:

- A pedestrian is hit by a falling load because the load is

unsecured, unstable, or the operator takes a turn too fast.

- A pedestrian gets caught between a pallet jack and a fixed object.
- Pedestrians or operators have their feet or toes run over.
- An operator is crushed between the pallet jack and shelves or storage racks.
- A container is pierced and workers come in contact with hazardous materials.
- Workers engage in horseplay or improper use, such as riding on a walkie pallet jack.
- An operator falls off or is thrown from a walkie-rider pallet jack.
- A pallet jack rolls off the edge of a loading dock, falling on the operator and killing him or her.

To avoid these types of accidents, it’s crucial to be aware of your surroundings and follow safe operating procedures at all times.

## Safe operation

To safely operate your motorized pallet jack after your pre-use inspection, you should:

- Verify that the weight of the load is within the rated capacity of your pallet jack.
- Move both forks under the load as far as possible while keeping the load centered on the forks.
- Raise the forks until the load is lifted just high enough for the wheels to engage and for good floor clearance.
- Before pulling out, look behind for pedestrians and make sure your path is clear of debris or other objects. Also, check to see that you have plenty of clearance between the pallet jack and any racks and shelves.
- Plan your route ahead of time before traveling with a load.

When parking a motorized pallet jack to check your

paperwork or take a quick break, choose a level surface that’s not in front of exits, stairs, walkways, or fire equipment. Before leaving your pallet jack, lower the forks all the way, set the controls to neutral, and ensure the brakes are engaged.

Motorized pallet jacks are invaluable tools, however they pose the same hazards as forklifts if the operator is not properly trained or if they fail to follow safe operating procedures.



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## Four ways stress can be good for you

*"Do not anticipate trouble, or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight."*

~ By  
Benjamin Franklin  
(1706-1790)

Prolonged stress wears the body down, but some short-term stress can be beneficial. That's good news, as there's little short-term chance of living a completely stress-free life.

A 2014 Wood study, "The Burden of Stress in America," from NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, found that 67 percent of those who said they experienced "a great deal of stress in the past month" believed that, at some point, stress had a positive effect.

Here's a look at how you benefit from short-term stress:

- 1. Motivation.** Good stress can stimulate a person to complete a task on deadline. It brings a mental state called "flow" in which awareness is heightened and one becomes absorbed in a task. The key to keeping stress at a healthful level is viewing the situation as a challenge that can be met rather than an insurmountable roadblock.
- 2. Resiliency.** Learning to repeatedly handle short-term stressful situations helps an individual develop a sense of



control, so a person doesn't shut down when faced with more stressful events. A 2013 University of California San Francisco study found that moderate levels of perceived daily stress seemed to protect against damage from stress.

- 3. Increased immunity.** A 2012 Stanford University study found that subjecting lab rats to mild stress mobilized several types of immune cells in their bloodstreams.
- 4. Increased intelligence.** University of California Berkeley studies suggest the body's response to stress can temporarily boost memory and learning scores. Low-level stress stimulates the production of chemicals in the brain which strengthens the connections between neurons. If you've ever come out of a test wondering how you came up with the answers, you've experienced this stress benefit.



*Not all stress is bad.*

### Using 4-7-8

A simple stress relieving technique is to breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, and breathe out completely for a count of eight. Try this three to seven times.

