



**LOADING
UP ON**

**LOADING
DOCK**

SAFETY

When we think of safety in the transportation industry, we automatically envision Ontario's roads, streets, and highways. However, safety on loading docks is also important.

Loading docks are busy places with vehicles and equipment moving about both inside and outside of the facility. When freight is being moved, time is of the essence. Along with efficient movement of materials, however, it is important to consider the safety of those working on and around the loading dock.

Although most docks or shipping areas are laid out and equipped to move freight safely and efficiently, they are also a place where a misstep or an inattentive moment can result in an injury. Always watch for hazards, even if you are not involved in the loading or unloading process.

Loading dock hazards

A review of incidents over the last decade in Ontario shows that workers can suffer serious injuries and fatalities at indoor and outdoor shipping and receiving areas. Fatalities have resulted from workers being:

- Pinned between loading dock and truck or trailer
- Pinned between truck and trailer
- Struck by or run over by a truck
- Struck by falling items that were not secured
- Struck by a falling dock plate.

Workers in shipping and receiving areas can be exposed to hazards involving external trucking firms contracted to deliver and carry loads. If truck drivers are not familiar with the workplace, it can put everyone at risk.

For example, there may be:

- Different measures and procedures for securing vehicles against accidental movement
- Unique features involving the yard layout
- Specialized dock levelling and dock locking systems
- Lifting devices that drivers may not be trained to use.

Safe work procedures

When working on and around loading docks, follow these best practices and procedures:

- Use the proper material handling equipment and inspect all components prior to use.
- Only use equipment that you are authorized and trained to operate. Know and follow the instructions in the manufacturer's manual and never exceed the recommended load rating.
- Keep out of the way of moving equipment. Don't get "trapped" into an injury.
- Stay alert between trucks and docks, lift trucks and other cargo, fixed objects, dock carts, or cargo that is being placed into position.
- Block the wheels of a vehicle before loading or unloading to prevent it from moving. Brakes alone can only do so much to stabilize a vehicle.
- Make sure dock plates are secured into position before using them. (See image below.)



Safety around tractor trailers

- Make sure that parking brakes are engaged to prevent movement and that the engine is shut off to avoid the buildup of fumes.
- To ensure that the tractor and trailer go nowhere during the loading and unloading process:
 - Have the driver turn over their keys.
 - Place a warning sign in front of the tractor cab.
 - Use a "dock lock" or "wheel lock" system.
 - Require truck drivers to remain in a designated area until loading/unloading is complete.



- Remove air from “air ride” or self-adjusting suspensions to improve trailer stability and reduce possible damage to the dock’s bumper pads.
- Make provisions to prevent railroad cars from being moved during loading and unloading. Wheel stops, hand brakes, and other recognized controls must be used to prevent movement during loading and unloading.
- Make sure that the trailer has both sides full back to the dock.
- Make sure both wheels are chocked. (See image below.)



- Use jack stands to prevent overbalancing on the dolly legs, especially when using trailers with reefers or pup trailers, or when loading heavy materials.
- Check the trailer floor to ensure it is in good condition and can handle the weight of your truck and load.
- If the dock or trailer floors are slippery, use sand or salt to provide better traction.
- Keep pedestrians clear of trailers in particular, and out of the dock area generally. If a pedestrian needs to talk to the operator, have them wait to the side of the dock plate out of the lift truck’s path of travel.
- Ensure the dock and trailer have proper lighting.
- Check the dock plate each time a vehicle rolls over it. Watch for any increase in the space between the trailer and the dock.
- Do not leave diesel, gasoline, propane, or natural gas vehicles running on a trailer while not in use.
- When backing off a trailer, stop and look over both shoulders to ensure the way is clear.
- When stacking materials on a trailer, check to make sure that your lift truck has sufficient “free lift” to allow this without damage to the trailer roof.

Safety around lift trucks

When working near the various types of lift trucks at loading docks, follow these best practices:

- Ensure that the operator of a powered lift truck has the training, knowledge, and skills required to be a “competent worker”.
- Ensure that powered lift trucks are maintained in a safe condition and are in compliance with regulatory requirements.
- Include elements of an effective powered lift truck safety program in training and safety meetings.
- Always wear suitable clothing and safety shoes or boots when you are working in a warehouse.
- Always use 3-point contact when getting in and out of the cab. That means either two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot on the vehicle at all times.
- Watch out for other workers and vehicles, especially near doorways and at the ends of aisles.
- When backing up, always look in the direction that you are travelling.

Loading dock inspections

It is important that loading docks be well-maintained at all times. Consider these items during regular inspections:

- General housekeeping and maintenance practices are being followed.
- Passageways and stairs are kept free of obstructions.
- Mirrors are installed at any blind corners.
- Outdoor areas are kept free of ice or snow in inclement weather.
- Materials are not stacked too high and items are stacked properly so that they will not tip over.
- Manual lifting is avoided or reduced when possible.
- Inspections are conducted on all pieces of equipment.
- Docks and the nearby areas are free of loose pavement or potholes.
- Warning signs are placed in areas where required.
- Truck engines are turned off when not needed.
- Combustible materials are properly stored.
- Spill kits are available and maintained.
- All staff and drivers are aware of the appropriate procedures and safety rules.

Following these procedures and best practices will provide you with a good basis for a loading dock safety program. IHSA can also assist with training lift truck operators. Visit ihsa.ca/training for more information.