



Store it right

and stay safe

With so much emphasis on the job to be done, sometimes we don't pay enough attention to how things are loaded, unloaded, or stored. Improper loading and storage on jobsites, in warehouses, at lumber and building supply yards, or at loading docks can lead to much more than a simple cut or bruise. It can leave you seriously injured, paralyzed, or even dead.

It's easy to imagine how this might happen. When material is loaded improperly onto a truck, it could fall off and land on your head. When it is left sticking out into a pathway, someone could trip on it and fall on something sharp. When material is not stacked properly, it could collapse on you. In some cases, the hazard may be in trying to get at stored items. Remember to make sure that you or a co-worker will be able to safely retrieve the things being stored.

Common hazards

Regardless of where you work, some of the common hazards related to storage are caused by

- a lack of space
- poor loading
- unsecured stacks
- damaged pallets
- unsafe or unsecured racking or shelving
- use of the wrong pallet for the racking system.

Be aware of any special storage requirements, such as for a dry, dark, or ventilated area. If you're dealing with chemicals, remember to check each material safety data sheet.

In the warehouse

When working in a warehouse or other type of storage facility, follow these safety guidelines.*

- ✓ Check that shelves and racks are sturdy and in good condition.
- ✓ Stack all materials on a flat base.
- ✓ Place heavier objects close to the floor, and lighter or smaller objects higher up.
- ✓ Do not stack anything so high that it could block the sprinklers or touch overhead pipes or ceiling lights.
- ✓ If material-handling equipment is available, use it for stacking empty skids or pallets. If it is not available, ask someone to help you.
- ✓ Never climb up the shelves or racking. When placing or removing anything above your head, use a safe means of access (e.g., elevating work platform, stair platform).
- ✓ Never stand on boxes or chairs to reach a shelf or rack.



- ✓ Stack empty skids and pallets flat rather than on end, and no more than 4 feet high.
- ✓ Stack lumber no more than 16 feet high if you are handling it manually, and no more than 20 feet if you are using a lift truck.
- ✓ When you are working at a height, use signs and barricades to alert people at ground level.
- ✓ To prevent objects from falling, don't put tools and materials on the edge of a platform, ladder, or railing.

On the jobsite

When working on a jobsite or in other work areas, follow these guidelines to help prevent injuries caused by unsafe storage practices.*

- ✓ Keep material at least 1.8 metres, or 6 feet, away from openings in floors and roofs, floor and roof edges, excavations, and trenches.
- ✓ Store materials away from overhead powerlines.
- ✓ Remove all nails from used lumber before stacking it.
- ✓ Stack and level lumber on solidly supported bracing.
- ✓ Ensure that stacks are stable and self-supporting.
- ✓ Do not store pipes and bars in racks that face main walkways. When material is being removed, they could roll off and hit someone.
- ✓ Stack bagged material by stepping back the layers and cross-keying the bags at least every 10 layers. (To remove bags from the stack, start from the top layer.)
- ✓ When baled paper and rags are stored inside a building, place them no closer than 18 inches from the walls, partitions, and sprinkler heads.

- ✓ Band boxed materials or secure them with cross-ties or shrink plastic fibre.
- ✓ When drums, barrels, or kegs are stored on their sides, block the bottom rows to keep them from rolling.
- ✓ When drums, barrels, or kegs are stacked on their ends, lay planks, sheets of plywood dunnage, or pallets between each row to make a firm, flat, stacking surface.
- ✓ When drums, barrels, and kegs are stored on their ends, chock the bottom tier on each side to prevent shifting in either direction when stacking two or more rows high.
- ✓ Stack loose bricks no more than 7 feet high. When a stack reaches a height of 4 feet, step it back 2 inches for every foot of height above the 4-foot level. When masonry blocks are stacked higher than 6 feet, step the stacks back one-half block for each tier above the 6-foot level.

Pay attention when you are stacking and storing material. Be sensible about where you put things and how you store them. Make storage hazards the topic of your next safety talk. Visit [ihsa.ca/safetytalks](https://www.ihsa.ca/safetytalks) to download free safety talks about these issues.

*Recommended measurements stated in this article are based on requirements outlined in American OSHA Regulations, Part 1926.