



SBMA's

Safety Newsletter

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"Safety Comes First."

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A sign for the times.



Forklifts are the most dangerous piece of equipment in a lumberyard.

Trouble spots: ten safety trouble spots for lumberyards and how to avoid them

by Pat Curry ProSales

Working in a lumberyard can be dangerous. Consider that employees might drive forklifts, operate saws or pneumatic nail guns, carry heavy loads of materials, and use flammable liquids--all in the same day. To protect your employees, your customers, and your company, safety and risk management should be a top priority at all times. With that thought in mind, PROSALES talked to safety experts, judges in this year's National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association's (NLBMDA) National Industry Leader in Safety Awards, and an attorney who specializes in OSHA citations to determine 10 trouble spots at lumberyards and how you can help ensure that your safety program is addressing employees' needs. Here is what they told us.

Housekeeping

A top item on experts' lists, sloppy housekeeping creates the proverbial accident waiting to happen. Deb Potter, who co-owns industrial safety consultancy Potter and Associates in Tulsa, Okla., with her husband Carl, suggests a weekly effort to clean up around the building and eliminate hazards (one of her client companies calls it "Tidy Friday").

Rotate members of your safety committee to get fresh sets of eyes that will see the hazards that can become invisible over time, adds Frank Perry, vice president of human resources for Redmond, Wash.-based Lanoga Corp.

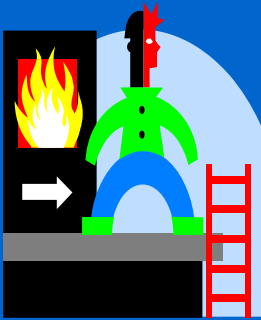
Also, make one staff member in each department responsible for housekeeping, and rotate the position each month. "When you get people involved in keeping things clean, you get peer pressure working for you," notes Ron Koons, president of RoSaKo Safety in Middletown, Ind.

Forklifts

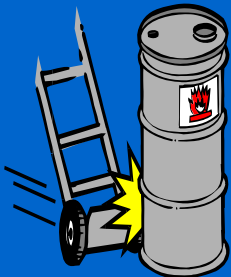
Forklifts are the most dangerous piece of equipment in a lumberyard. Every year, around 100 people in the country die in forklift accidents, according to Thomas Fife, a Unionville, Ind.-based safety consultant. Four steps can make all the difference in preventing forklift injuries, he says: driver training and certification, a company policy requiring forklift drivers to wear seat belts, regular maintenance of the equipment, and a safety inspection at the beginning of each shift. Of those, he says driver training and certification is most important. OSHA requires that a person be evaluated every three years for every class of forklift he or she will drive at your company. Fife



The failure to have a lock out/tag out program for equipment powered by electricity is one of the top OSHA violations.



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highly recommends NLBMDA's "The Forklift and You" certification program.

Lock Out/Tag Out

The failure to have a lock out/tag out program for equipment powered by electricity is one of the top OSHA violations for the LBM industry, Fife says. Having a program is a must. All machinery should be locked with a padlock and all pneumatic air tools should be drained at the end of a shift. If a piece of equipment is not working properly, it should be locked out so that no one can accidentally turn it on and use it when it isn't safe to do so. It also should be tagged with the name of the person who locked it out, the problem with the equipment, and the name of the person with the key.

Only authorized individuals should perform lock out/tag out steps. Also, keep a log detailing when equipment is locked out for repair and when it is returned to service. This can help identify equipment with persistent problems.

Equipment Maintenance

Missing or damaged guards and dull blades on saws are common equipment maintenance trouble spots. Paying attention to these kinds of maintenance items helped Lanoga improve its recordable incidence and lost days rates by more than 40 percent each since September 2003.

Regular equipment maintenance is a must, along with daily and shift inspections to make sure that all guards are in place and blades are properly sharpened. Lanoga investigates near misses as aggressively as it does incidents, a practice safety pros strongly recommend and one that can often reveal equipment maintenance needs.

Fire Drills and Fire Safety Equipment

Most companies don't have fire drills and most employees have never heard the company's fire alarm or know how to use a fire extinguisher, Fife says. He recommends semiannual fire drills. For each department, assign "emergency action leaders" who count heads during a fire drill or emergency to make sure everyone gets out of the building. If you have disabled employees, assign an action leader to each person to assist him or her.

As for the fire extinguisher, just remember to PASS: Pull the pin, Aim, Squeeze the trigger, and Spray the fire from the bottom up. Also, make sure that fire exits and fire extinguishers aren't blocked in any way at any time.

Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials need to be locked away in an OSHA-acceptable cabinet, which few companies actually have, Fife says. Gas cans are a notable problem. "Two gallons of gas in a 5-gallon can [has the potential to] destroy a building [if it ignites]," Carl Potter says.

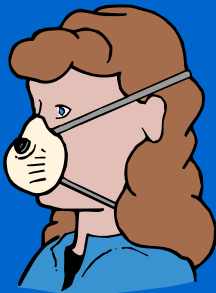
Make sure MSDS sheets are kept up-to-date and in a place that is easily accessible to firefighters, such as a locked box near your gate.

Load Building

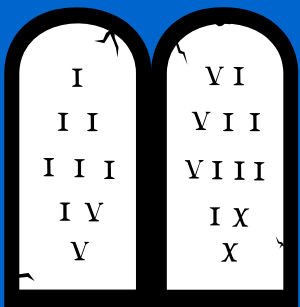
This function has four major potential safety issues: the use of forklifts, the use of banders, lifting



Make load building safer through regular equipment maintenance.



Sawdust has been listed as a carcinogen since the late 1990s.



No, I'm not asking you to break one of the Ten Commandments.

techniques, and the risk of falling loads.

One of the biggest dangers in load building, Deb Potter says, is when a person sees a load start to shift and "jumps up there to try to hold it. It's the equivalent of trying to hold a building up," she says.

Make load building safer through regular equipment maintenance; training in the use of the bander, forklifts, and proper lifting techniques (including standards for items that require two people to lift); and establishing banding stations. In addition, elevated banding stations with equipment sheds make it easier on the back to band the load, and they provide a central location for clips, snips, gloves, wrapping material, and spacers to help secure loads.

Fife notes that metal bands can produce severe cuts, so gloves should always be worn while building loads.

Material Stacking

Be on the lookout for improperly stored materials on racks and for broken pallets, says Jeff Tanenbaum, a San Francisco-based attorney who specializes in occupational safety and health. For example, bagged items that aren't palletized can break and deflate, creating an imbalance in the stacks.

Secure placement and safe storage on overhead racks has been "a great subject of investigation by OSHA," Tanenbaum says. They're looking for violations such as stacking and storage of materials above head level without safety netting or other protective measures.

Respiratory Protection

Sawdust has been listed as a carcinogen since the late 1990s, Koons says. Employees exposed to wood dust need to be protected as required by OSHA.

Working "Cold"

Some injuries in lumber operations are back and muscle injuries, and occur during the first hour of the day, Fife says. "It's because we're not warmed up," he notes. "If you can take five minutes to have people do basic stretching, that will come back to you in saving lost time and injuries." He recommends back stretches, trunk twists, and hamstring stretches. Tanenbaum agrees wholeheartedly. "It's one of the most important things you can do," he says. "You [wouldn't] go out and run a marathon without training for it. Working is like a marathon. You're there eight hours. You need to be in shape."

Lumberyard safety: steal something!

By Speed, Gregg

No, I'm not asking you to break one of the Ten Commandments. I'm asking you to use the first commandment of risk management: "Thou shall steal great ideas from other lumber dealers, adjust them to fit your location, and then call them your own." The fastest, most effective way to improve your safety bottom line is networking with your peers and using their best practices at your facility. Most dealers would agree that safety is important, yet they sometimes hold back on new programs because of expense. Safety does have a cost, but the most effective programs require much more than dollars. The price of success in safety demands leadership buy-in, shared responsibility between managers and employees, and a willingness to hold ourselves

accountable.

Networking comes in many shapes and sizes. Take advantage of buying share groups, your regional lumber associations, and the resources at NLBMDA. Here in Maine, Hancock Lumber is a member of a self-insured group for workers' cutup. We openly share safety success and failures with all 23 members within this Trust. Also, look for safety ideas outside of our industry. Whatever issue you have, find someone who handles it better than you do. It's OK to steal, pilfer, borrow, and utilize all the resources you have available to manage your company's risk. Your company will be better for it. --Gregg Speed is safety director at Hancock Lumber in Casco, Maine.

Top 10 Business Safety Tips

There's a lot to be said for creating a safe work environment. Generally, employees are happier and healthier, production is better, and insurance premiums are lower in a safe workplace. However, maintaining a safe and productive workplace means more than just writing a set of safety rules. It requires creating an environment in which all of your employees participate in achieving safety goals. By adhering to the following general safety tips, you can take the first important steps.

1. Encourage your employees to work safely; at the same time, know the specific causes of possible accidents.
2. Remember that your employees are also your best consultants. Solicit their input on how to improve workplace safety.
3. Promote any actions which make the workplace more enjoyable. Create a system that gives workers' the ability to provide supervisors with both positive and negative feedback on all operational matters.
4. Ensure that work areas are cleaned regularly and free of hazards. All equipment should be checked regularly to ensure proper operation. If safety gear is necessary, be sure it is available at all times.
5. Do not create overly complicated emergency procedures. Keep accident plans simple: workers' will need to understand all the instructions immediately.
6. Emergencies require not only plans, but also supplies. Put fire extinguishers in plain view, and make sure employees know how to use them. Keep a first-aid kit and emergency phone numbers readily accessible.
7. Safeguard all storage areas. Be sure all materials are placed neatly on shelves, pallets, or in boxes. Keep flammable liquids, and other waste materials in sealed metal containers, away from sources of heat.
8. Your building should adhere to all fire and safety codes. Check that all exits are clearly marked and unobstructed.
9. If you use any motor vehicles for your business, service them regularly. Stock vehicles with jumper cables, flashlights, cellular phones, and first-aid kits.
10. Learn from your experiences. Keep track of events that led to or nearly resulted in workplace accidents.

Compliance with safety requirements can result in fewer worker compensation claims and absences due to injuries. Creating a positive atmosphere about accident and injury prevention can be a major benefit to your company. In addition, paying close attention to detail will make a big difference in improving your workplace safety. Try to involve everyone in safety efforts, and be sure to conduct emergency drills every few months so your employees are prepared to take action in a crisis. We hope you'll keep this checklist as a quick reference tool for your regular safety reviews. If there is anything we can do as your insurance agency please let us know.



There's a lot to be said for creating a safe work environment.

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