

Shipping and receiving safety

Hazards: biological, chemical, ergonomic, physical

Shippers and receivers send, accept, and record the movement of parts, supplies, materials, equipment, and stock to and from an establishment. Often this department can be overlooked in the broader application of an EHS program which primarily focuses on the manufacturing processes. Let's discuss some of the hazard categories associated with Shipping/Receiving and how we can take steps to mitigate them.

- **Biological:** Depending on the materials stored, biological hazards may or may not be present.
 - There is the potential for infection caused by birds or rodents when working in polluted or old structures. Infections include histoplasmosis (from bird droppings) or hantavirus (from mice droppings).
 - There is a possibility of exposure to molds, fungi and bacteria from areas and materials that have had contact with water (e.g., water leak that leads to mold in wood or drywall).
- **Chemical:** Workers may be exposed to a variety of chemicals and materials that are stored in the warehouse, used for tasks such as cleaning/maintenance, or produced by equipment used. Examples include:
 - Toxic materials stored or used such as solvents, sealants, caustics, and glue.
 - Plastic fumes from shrink wrap, bag sealers, and plastic strapping welders.
 - Use of battery powered equipment (battery acid can cause burns to skin and eyes, and battery recharging process produces hydrogen gas which can explode if allowed to build up and where an ignition source is present).
 - Fuel powered vehicles which create exposure to carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide or exhaust fumes from trucks at the loading and receiving docks, and forklifts
- **Ergonomic:** There are many situations where physical demands involve force, repetition, awkward postures, and prolonged activities. These include:
 - Standing for long periods of time
 - Lifting
 - Working in awkward positions (twisting, bending, etc.). See work-related musculoskeletal disorders for more information
 - Repetitive manual operations (such as packing small parts quickly, etc.)
 - Pushing and pulling objects in general
 - Pushing and pulling hand carts
- **Physical:** Workers may be required to work outdoors. As a result, they may be exposed to extreme temperatures and ultraviolet radiation.
 - Where the temperature in the building cannot be controlled adequately, work may be done in hot environments (especially during summer months). Alternatively, workers assigned to work in cold or frozen storage areas may experience cold stress.
 - Noise may also be a concern depending on the types of activities carried out.

Controls

- Use correct procedures for both manual materials handling (lifting), and materials handling (using cranes, hoists, etc.).
- Be aware of awkward body positions and avoid where possible. If a job requires work in an awkward position (e.g., with hands above shoulder level) or repetition, be sure to take frequent breaks.
- Always use the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) for the task.
- Wear appropriate footwear (for walking/standing, as well as protection from dropped objects).
- Keep all work areas clear of clutter and equipment.
- Know how to handle and store chemicals and materials safely.
- Always make sure that the tools and the safety features of tools and equipment are in good working order before using.
- Follow a recommended shift work pattern and be aware of the hazards associated with shift work.

Site specific requirements:

Employee participants:

Date:
