

## **Empty Skids and Pallets**

The handling of empty skids and pallets may seem like a rather routine job to most of us, at least as far as safety is concerned. But don't be fooled. In doing this type of work we perform certain acts that can easily result in injuries if safety precautions aren't taken. Material handling causes more injuries than any other type of work. I can even be more specific and say that lifting is the leading type of accident suffered by people on the job. And, of course, in handling skids and pallets, lifting is a basic maneuver.

So, let's take a few moments to go over some of the steps we can take to keep injuries at a minimum.

- First, inspect the skids and pallets you'll be working with for splinters, loose nails, and other defects. If you find a unit that is unsafe, it should be set aside and marked for discard or repair.
- Any lifting to be done should be performed with caution. Usually the handling of skids requires two people, whether stacking or discarding, and they should lift in unison. The same procedure should be used for lifting pallets if they are heavy or bulky.
- Lifting should be done by bending your knees, then straightening your legs to lift. Keep your back straight and use leg muscles, not back muscles.

As an added safety measure while handling objects, there is certain protective equipment which should be worn. Leather work gloves will protect your hands, and, of course, safety shoes will protect your toes. You probably already realize how important a clean work area is to your safety and the safety of others. Safe housekeeping has to go into skid and pallet handling too.

- Stacking should be done with care so that piles will be stable. Piles should be limited to four feet or less, and units should be stacked flat, and never on end.
- Piles and individual units must be kept clear of aisles and doorways, and they shouldn't obstruct switch boxes, fire extinguishers, and other emergency equipment. If possible avoid walking on or stepping over skids and pallets, as this can result in an accident.

As we mentioned earlier, it may be necessary to discard certain units for scrap. In that case, trucks or dollies should be used, especially if the load is to be moved any distance. Load of units to be discarded should be stacked carefully. Be on guard for nails and splinters.

We've taken several minutes to cover some of the major points of safety in handling empty skids and pallets. They're all pretty basic—the type of precautions that should be taken on many jobs. But that's the way it should go with safety. Develop safe practices and attitudes on one job, and they'll follow through in everything you do.

