A Health and Safety Solution

Pallets
Loading and unloading items – using vacuum lifters

What is the problem?
Manually loading/unloading items to and from pallets, which are often on the floor, involves frequent awkward postures and repetitive exertion of force to lift and lower items.

What are the risks?
Handling items while bending, twisting and reaching increases the risk of musculoskeletal disorders to the shoulders, lower back, abdomen and knees. These injuries can occur when lifting heavy objects (particularly in awkward postures), but they can also occur over time through wear and tear on the body.

What is a solution to the problem?
The risk of musculoskeletal disorders can be reduced by using a vacuum lifter to effectively reduce the force (note this is one solution, see the other Health and Safety Solutions about loading and unloading items to and from pallets for more options).

Vacuum lifters reduce the force required to handle an item – and its handle design can minimise any awkward postures to pick up objects from the bottom, top and centre of a pallet.

The most common products to be lifted using vacuum lifters are boxes, bags and flat objects. However, many materials can be lifted by vacuum lifters. While vacuum lifters reduce the manual handling risk, they do not eliminate it.

Make sure equipment has a sufficient rated capacity for the load being suspended and is appropriately maintained. Care must also be taken to ensure materials lifted by a vacuum lifter are not suspended over people and that loads are fully supported before releasing the vacuum.

Ensure that all employees who use the equipment or work in the area are trained in its safe operation and in the systems of work for its safe use and maintenance, including traffic management systems.

Talk to your suppliers to determine whether this solution is most practicable for you. Also see the Health and Safety Solutions listed below.

Further Information
WorkSafe Advisory Service
Toll-free: 1800 136 089
Email: info@worksafe.vic.gov.au
worksafe.vic.gov.au

Related WorkSafe Health and Safety Solutions
Pallets – Loading and unloading items – using automation
Pallets – Unloading items – using a bulk delivery method
Pallets – Handling items above shoulder height
Pallets – Loading and unloading

The problem
Worker unloading bags.

A solution
Worker using a vacuum lifter.

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