

## **PALLET SAFETY**

Webster defines a pallet as a "support for freight." As a support, it has the potential to take a lot of abuse. A lot of old pallets are never discarded when they should be. They are stacked in a corner and not used except as a last resort when there are no good ones left. Too many times we hear that a pallet has broken and the freight has fallen to the floor. This not only causes freight damage but can also result in equipment damage--or worse yet, in employee injury or death. Please take a moment to review the following safety tips for working around palletized loads:

- Develop a pallet inspection program. Before you use a pallet, inspect it for cracks, weaknesses and other damage. If you find damage, mark it unsafe for use until it is either fixed or thrown away. This can prevent a lot of potential problems.
- When loading a pallet, make sure the load is centered and not out of balance.
- If the pallet is holding several loose items, make sure the entire load is secured with shrink wrap or banding.
- Exercise caution when stacking several pallets high. Make sure the stack is not leaning, because of weak or broken segments, which may cause the whole pile to fall over.
- Always know the load limit of the pallet jack or forklift you are using. Neither the pallets nor mechanical lifting devices should ever be overloaded.
- Load limits should also be established and marked on warehouse floors--balconies, mezzanines, etc. Always comply with these.
- Make sure your forklift has an overhead cage or screen to protect the driver from falling objects when merchandise is being stacked overhead.

Remember--thinking ahead can save a lot of trouble. It is a waste of production time and effort to reload a pallet that has fallen. But, more importantly, an effective pallet/warehouse safety plan can prevent injuries and save lives!