

# Spot The Safety Violation: 6 Steps to Safely Store Materials



What do you think happened to the plant manager who was walking by this stack of metal beams when it toppled over?



Although it's critical to ensure that workers safely handle or move materials, it's equally important to ensure that materials are properly *stored* in the workplace.

For example, this picture shows the aftermath of the collapse of a stack of metal beams at a workplace in New Jersey. As the plant manager was walking between the stack and a tractor trailer flat bed, the pile toppled over, pinning him underneath. Paramedics were called but he was pronounced dead at the scene from blunt impact injuries to his head and neck. An investigation into the incident found that the stack of beams was unstable and unsecured.

## TAKE THESE 6 STEPS

The OHS regulations include requirements for the safe storage of materials to prevent incidents such as this one. To comply with such requirements, employers should generally take the following steps:

### Step #1: Use Proper Storage Racks

Storage racks are commonly used to store materials in warehouses, distribution centres, retail stores and manufacturing plants. But if these racks are improperly installed or used, or become damaged in some way, they can endanger workers. (Use this checklist to inspect the storage racks in your workplace to ensure that they're safe.)

### Step #2: Ensure that Stacks of Materials Are Safe

If materials are stored in stacks or piles, such as the heavy metal beams in

this picture, ensure that such stacks don't endanger workers. For example, these beams should've been stacked horizontally, on their widest part, and not vertically. Also, brace, strap, cross-tie or otherwise restrain stacked materials or containers to prevent them from collapsing or falling from the pile. And ensure that stacks aren't piled to a height that could endanger their stability.

### **Step #3: Take Extra Care Storing Certain Materials**

Certain materials, such as loose/bulk materials, may be subject to specific or additional storage requirements. So check your OHS regulations for such requirements and comply with them.

### **Step #4: Ensure Storage Area Itself Is Safe**

Also ensure that the areas around stacks, piles and storage racks are safe. For example, the aisles between racks should be wide enough for the safe operation of powered mobile equipment and kept free of obstacles. And stored materials shouldn't interfere with or block:

- Lighting;
- Ventilation;
- Doors or windows;
- Passageways or traffic lanes;
- The operation of machines;
- Sprinklers and firefighting equipment; or
- Electrical panels.

### **Step #5: Implement Safe Storage Rules and Practices**

Create and implement rules and practices for the safe storage of materials and safe removal of those materials from storage. For example, bar workers from stacking materials too high or overloading racks beyond their safe load limits. And have procedures for safely dealing with situations in which materials *do* collapse or fall from storage racks.

### **Step #6: Train Workers on Safe Materials Storage**

Be sure to train workers on your safe materials storage rules and procedures as well as the requirements in your jurisdiction for storing materials.