

Spot The Safety Violation: Stacked Crates Aren't a Safe Substitute for Ladders



Although plastic crates have many purposes, do you think this worker is using them properly'or safely'

Plastic milk crates have a number of practical uses, but substituting stacked crates for ladders isn't one of them. If

one of the crates in this picture from WorkSafe Victoria in Australia shifts while the worker's standing on it, he could suffer a serious injury not only from the fall, but also from having the container he's lifting land on top of him.

Although the crates may be a convenient option, a safer choice would be to use a proper stepladder like the worker below:

So to avoid a similar situation in your workplace:

- Provide workers with the tools and equipment that they need to do their jobs safely, including portable ladders
- Make sure that your portable ladders comply with the [requirements under the OHS laws for such ladders](#)
- Train workers on the safe use of ladders, including requiring workers to [inspect ladders](#) before using them to ensure that they're in safe condition

Another safety issue depicted in the picture is the fact the worker is lifting the storage container over his head. Of course, we don't know how heavy the container is but lifting items above shoulder height in general puts stress on a worker's [neck, shoulders and upper back](#) and places him at risk of developing a musculoskeletal injury (MSI). (See, [Ergonomics Compliance Centre](#))

To protect workers when [manually moving materials](#), such as stacking them on shelves, [take these five steps](#):

- 1) Determine whether the materials can be moved mechanically, such as with a [forklift](#);
- 2) If not, assess the risks of moving the materials manually (use this [checklist](#));
- 3) Adapt the materials to eliminate or reduce any risks to workers;
- 4) Develop methods for safely lifting and moving materials; and

5) Train workers on these safe work practices.