

Pallet safety—Best practices



Pallets: the most common, overlooked hazard for your business

Pallets, also known as skids, can be found in almost any business across the United States. They are useful for stacking, storing, moving and shipping practically anything. Although they are quite useful and readily available, they are often overlooked as a common source of employee injury and business property loss.

Pallets should be thoroughly inspected for cracks, protruding nails or broken boards prior to being used. Damaged pallets can cause a load to spill, damaging the product, nearby storage racks or equipment, the building or even injuring nearby employees.

Quickly removing a pallet from the production floor is essential to prevent many employee injuries. Pallets should never be stored upright or on end, because they are easily knocked over; this is a common cause of serious foot, ankle and leg injuries. Pallets that are left on the floor for employees to step over are often responsible for twisted ankles and knees and even leg fractures.

Due to their ease of combustibility, pallets can create a significant fire hazard for any building, whether the pallets are stored indoors or outdoors. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) regulates idle pallet storage for buildings that do and do not have an automatic sprinkler system. If a building is protected with an automatic sprinkler system, the pallet storage configuration, including the height and clearance from other combustibles, is determined by the type of sprinkler system protecting the building. For buildings that are not protected with an automatic sprinkler system, the NFPA has very few regulations. In an effort to promote best risk control practices, the idle pallet storage guidelines listed below should be followed, regardless of the existence of an automatic sprinkler system in a building.

Indoor storage

- Stacks of idle pallets should never be stored in a rack system.
- Idle pallet stacks should never exceed six feet in height.
- There should never be more than four stacks of pallets to a single pile.
- Piles of pallets stacked in squares or in line should be at least eight feet apart.
- Commodity storage should be at least 25 feet from pallet piles.

The information contained in this service bulletin was obtained from reliable sources. However, United Fire Group accepts no legal responsibility for the correctness or completeness of this information.

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Outdoor storage

- Pallet stacks should be no more than 15 feet in height and stable.
- Pallet piles should cover no more than 400 square feet (that's a 5-by-5 stack of 48-inch pallets).
- Piles of pallets should be at least eight feet apart.
- Pallet piles should not be closer than eight feet from any property line, unless the local fire code requires a greater distance.

Clearance between outside idle pallet storage and other yard storage:

# Pallets	Clearance
Less than 50	20 feet
50 to 200	30 feet
More than 200	50 feet

Clearance between outside idle pallet storage and building:

Construction	Less than 50	50 to 200	Over 200
Masonry (no openings)	0 feet	0 feet	0 feet
Wood/metal, etc. w/ AS*	10 feet	20 feet	30 feet
Wood/metal, etc. w/o AS*	20 feet	30 feet	50 feet

* Automatic Sprinkler System

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