



## **Hazard Alert**

### **Materials Handling and Storage in the Beverage Distribution and Retail Industry**

#### **The Hazard**

Handling and storing materials specific to the beverage distribution and retail industry involves diverse operations such as hoisting pallets, boxes, and kegs of bottled beverages; carrying materials manually; and stacking palletized beverages. The efficient handling and storing of materials are vital to the industry. Unfortunately, the improper handling and storing of materials often result in costly injuries.

#### **Solutions**

In addition to training and education, proper work practices can help reduce workplace accidents involving the moving, handling, and storing of bottled beverages. Because numerous injuries can result from improperly handling and storing materials, employees should also be aware of accidents that may result from the unsafe or improper handling of equipment as well as from improper work practices.

#### **Safe Handling**

Workers frequently cite the weight and bulkiness of objects that they lift as major contributing factors to the hazards of their work. Using personal protective equipment such as gloves and steel-toed safety shoes or boots can prevent needless injuries when manually moving materials. Lifting loads heavier than about 50 pounds will increase the risk of injury. To prevent injuries, use mechanical means such as forklifts, pallet jacks, or hand trucks to transport heavy items. Materials that must be manually lifted should be placed in the midrange of the body, about mid-thigh to mid-chest. Maintain neutral and straight spine alignment whenever possible. Usually, bending at the knees, not the waist helps maintain proper spine alignment. Reaching moves the load away from the back, increases the effective load, and places considerable strain on the shoulders. Carrying loads on one shoulder, under an arm, or in one hand, creates uneven pressure on the spine. Employees should move items close to your body and use your legs when lifting an item from a low location. Minimize bending and reaching by placing heavy objects on shelves, tables, or racks. Avoid twisting, especially when bending forward while lifting. Turn by moving the feet rather than twisting the torso. Keep your elbows close to your body and keep the load as close to your body as possible. Keep the vertical distance of lifts between mid-thigh and



shoulder height. Do not start a lift below mid-thigh height nor end the lift above shoulder height. Lifting from below waist height puts stress on legs, knees, and back. Lifting above shoulder height puts stress on the upper back, shoulders, and arms.

### **Safe Storage**

Stored beverages must not create a hazard for employees or customers at a retail site. Employers should make workers aware of such factors as the materials' height and weight, how accessible the stored materials are to the user, and the condition of the containers where the materials are being stored when stacking and piling materials. To prevent creating hazards when storing beverages, employers must keep storage areas free from accumulated materials that cause tripping, fires, or explosions. Store beverages on racks, and secure it by stacking, blocking, or interlocking to prevent it from sliding, falling, or collapsing. Falling materials and collapsing loads can crush or pin workers, causing injuries or death. To help prevent injuries when stacking materials, workers must ensure that stacks are stable and self-supporting; store materials no closer than 18 inches to the walls, partitions, or sprinkler heads; band boxed materials or secure them with cross-ties or shrink plastic fiber; and stack boxes and kegs symmetrically. At the beverage retail locations, employers should post stripes to indicate maximum stacking heights for quick reference and observe height limitations when stacking materials.

### **Safe Ladder and Mobile Stairs Use**

Beverage industry employees make use of ladders and mobile stairs when stocking retail locations. Falls from portable ladders, including mobile stairs, are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries. Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder. Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded. Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing. Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step unless it was designed for that purpose. Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder. Be sure that all locks on ladders and mobile stairs are properly engaged. Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools, equipment, or materials.