Cart Safety Meeting Kit

Carts come in many sizes and styles and are used by workers in many industries. Here are safety issues to consider.

WRONG TYPE/ WRONG SIZE: Hazards associated with carts include using the wrong type for the job or the wrong size of cart for the worker (ergonomics).

NO PROPER TRAINING: Carts can cause injury to the handler who has had inadequate training and carts can cause the handler injury if the cart has not been properly maintained.

DESIGN AND CAPACITY: Make sure that the cart has the design and capacity for the job. Some carts have open sides or spring loaded bottoms that assist the handler with loading and unloading. Carts should have enough room to store necessary supplies and equipment. Use carts for their intended purpose; reckless horseplay can lead to injuries. Unless the cart was designed to carry people, do not allow passengers.

CORRECT WHEELS: Larger and harder wheels are easier and require less force to push. Steel wheels are the easiest, followed by hard rubber, and plastic; soft rubber wheels are the hardest to push. For tight spaces and crowded work conditions, four swivel wheels or casters add maneuverability. For pushing long distances, two swivel wheels and two straight wheels help ease movement.

PARKING/BRAKING SYSTEMS: Carts need a wheel-locking mechanism to park them. Take care where you park your cart; do not block walkways, exits, or doorways. A braking system adds additional control on slopes and ramps.

HANDLES: Handles should be located at the rear of the cart and at the proper height for pushing. It is easier on your back to push than to pull. Lean in the direction in which you are going and use your arms and legs (not your back) for leverage. If you must pull a cart, keep the cart at your side to avoid twisting your back.

INSPECTIONS: Inspect your cart each time you use it; it should be

properly functioning and in good repair. Wheel bearings require periodic inspections and maintenance, and damaged wheels should be replaced.

HAZARDS IN USING HAND CARTS

The most common injuries that result from hand cart operations are:

- fingers and hands being caught in, on, or between the cart and other objects,
- toes, feet and lower legs being bumped or crushed by the cart,
- slips, trips, and falls, and
- strain injuries predominantly for the lower back, shoulder, and arm muscles and joints.

WEAR PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT.

Depending on the situation, you may need to use protective wear. Frequently recommended personal protective equipment includes the following:

- Leather gloves
- Back support belt
- Protective footwear
- Special foot guards, shoes, or boots

KEEP YOUR VIEW CLEAR.

You should be able to see where you are going. Load your cart in such a way that nothing obstructs your view. An obstructed view prevents you from reacting fast and moving away from other individuals, objects, or machines that get in the way of your cart.

WHEN PUSHING OR PULLING HEAVY OBJECTS, USE GOOD BODY MECHANICS

- Tighten your stomach muscles
- Bend your knees
- Lean in slightly toward the object you are pushing
- Lean slightly away from the object when pulling
- Keep your back and wrists straight
- Use your legs and the weight of your body to move the object

BEST SAFETY PRACTICES FOR PUSHING A CART PROPERLY

- Keep your hands at just above waist level. This helps to better balance center of gravity and significantly reduces injury risks.
- Always use both arms. Again, this helps to evenly distribute the amount of force needed to move the cart, which ultimately results in safer movement.
- Keep your back straight. A bent back is dangerous because it can lead to strained muscles.
- Contract your stomach muscles. This helps to strengthen and solidify your core as you push, which helps to prevent many common overexertion injuries.
- Keep your body close to the wheel cart. The further away you are from the cart, the more force you will need to exert to move it. Staying close allows you to use your bodyweight to your advantage and apply extra force without overexerting yourself.
- Move slowly. Heavy carts should be moved very slowly; the heavier the load, the longer it will take for it to stop when you are ready to stop.
- Wear the right shoes. Anti-slip shoes are vital for moving heavy carts. If your feet slip out from under you, this can cause fall injuries.
- Check for debris before moving and during motion. Clearing the area of debris before moving the cart can help keep the

process safer, but it’s important to continue checking the area for new debris as you go.

- Use high-quality casters and caster wheels that are appropriate for the load. Using the wrong casters can cause serious injury should the caster fail, and if the casters are not ergonomic, it increases the amount of force needed to push the load. This alone can increase overexertion injuries.

FINAL WORD

Pushing a cart in a warehouse site seems at first blush to be a simple and safe manoeuvre. But hold on – there are common injuries in this operation; fingers and hands being caught in or between the cart, slips and falls and strains to lower back and shoulder.