Forklifts Pallet Jacks

There are at least 8 ways for supervisors to determine the safest method to perform any task, including moving pallet jacks.

1. **Look at the Entire Task**

Ask for volunteers—preferably among workers who use pallet jacks on the job—to help you evaluate the task and see if safety improvements can be made. Making workers demonstrate their techniques should enable you to identify problem areas and bolster safety—not to mention overall efficiency.

2. **Conduct a Group Hazard Identification**

We think of hazard analysis as an individual task. But it doesn't have to be that way. Have the group do a hazard analysis of the task and identify all the hazards and risks they spot. During the analysis, have your workers consider:

How far was the material moved?

What was the weight of the material moved?

On what type of surface were the materials being moved?

Back strains aren't the only hazard associated with pallet jack use. What if workers using pallet jacks should slip and fall? Could the pallet jack run into them? And what if the pallet gets caught on something? Could it strain or pull the worker's shoulder out of socket? You may be surprised how many other hazards the group can identify.

3. **Conduct a Group Risk Management**

Continue the group conversation and take it from hazard analysis to risk management. Discuss options available to eliminate each hazard the group identified and how each step of the job can be performed safely.

4. **Read the Instructions**

If the group agrees that a pallet jack is the preferred tool, be sure to review the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations on the proper use of the pallet jack. There are many styles and it could be different for each one.

5. **Develop a "Best Practice," Not a Procedure**

The recommended best practice that you develop is a start. It will help you establish and maintain control over the matter. But it should not be an inflexible or unchanging procedure. Encourage workers to continue to identify risks and watch for ways to improve the best practice.

6. **Conduct Training**

Now it's time to share the group's findings with everyone affected. If necessary, provide training as part of the follow up. By sharing with everyone, you create an expectation that this is the preferred way to handle pallet jacks.

7. **Conduct an Audit**

Audit your expectations. Since you have shared your expectations with everyone, they can help you audit when they walk through the area. Using a bit of diplomacy, everyone from management to hourly can have the courage to intervene and help reduce the risk of an injury if they observe an unsafe behavior.

8. **Review Regularly**

Based on your audits and feedback, continue to look for corrections or additional improvements.

Conclusion

This may be information you already know, but it has worked well for me in the past. And it's a process you can apply to almost any task in the workplace.