OSHA: Intro to Pallet Jack Safety

Key Takeaways:
– Learning the key components of manual and powered pallet jacks.
– Observing potential hazards associated with using a pallet jack.
– Understanding the responsibility as a pallet jack operator to ensure safe operation.
– Learning procedures for safe loading, unloading, and moving of loads using a pallet jack.

Course Description
This course will concentrate on the safe operation of both manual and powered hydraulic pallet jacks.

OSHA has defined Powered Industrial Trucks (PIT) as any power-propelled truck used to carry, push, pull, lift, stack or tier materials. This categorizes electric power jacks under the same regulatory standard as forklifts, whereas manual pallet jacks, despite being similar in many ways, are considered simple machines or tools.

For your safety, pallet jack operation needs to include training, familiarity with operation, inspection of the jack prior to use, wearing the right personal protective equipment (PPE), planning your route, and avoidance of horseplay.

Regular hazards tied to pallet jack operation include falling objects (struck by hazards), such as loads or even operators. When you quickly move a loaded pallet jack too quickly over uneven floors or on inclines, the load may topple. Both you and others could be injured if the load falls, and the load and/or the workplace may be damaged. Struggling to move a stuck pallet jack or failing to control it on an incline can cause the operator to slip and fall.

A different hazard of pallet jacks involves striking objects or people. When you strike door frames, columns, or other stationary

objects with a loaded pallet jack, property can be damaged and there may be bodily harm such as abrasions, bruises, and fractures from the resulting impact. Clearly, ramming the pallet jack into a person is probable to injure, but tripping on exposed forks is another way workers can get hurt.

Another typical factor to occupational injuries resulting from pallet jack operation is muscular strain. Often, the experience of back and muscle strain happens if you adjust loads or move a loaded pallet jack incorrectly. Since pallet jacks are designed to be pushed and not pulled, forceful pulling may cause strain or shoulder dislocation.

Also relatively common are crushed-by incidents. Those most at risk are bystanders, who may get a foot injury if a load is dropped on their feet or if a pallet jack runs over their feet. As well, bystanders can be crushed by run-away loads, such as when working in a trailer or confined area with a sloped floor surface. Likewise, pallet jack operators can be crushed between their loaded pallet jack and a stationary object, which is why it is a good reason to push, and not pull, a pallet jack.