How to Handle Handcarts Safely



Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

It's a rare workplace that doesn't have some sort of handcart for moving stock and equipment. From wheelbarrows and furniture carts to dollies and pallet jacks, handcarts help do a job better and faster, and they help to prevent back injuries caused by lifting heavy items.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Compared to a piece of heavy equipment, a handcart doesn't seem like one of the big dangers of the workplace. But anyone who has ever operated one for any length of time will tell you there are a surprising number of ways to be injured.

Hazards include:

- Struck by falling loads.
- Back strain if you move the handcart the wrong way or lift materials incorrectly.
- Cuts and pinch points.
- Foot injuries from hand trucks running over your foot.
- Injuries caused when an operator loses control of the handcart on an incline.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

9 Easy Ways to Safely Operate a Handcart

1. Inspect to Protect

- Is it in good mechanical condition overall?
- Are the brakes working?
- Tag and place faulty equipment out of service.

2. Safe Stack

- Keep the center of gravity low by putting heavier objects on the bottom.
- Use strapping to hold a load in place.
- Keep load height low enough so you have a clear view ahead.
- Don’t exceed the weight capacity.

3. Pay Attention!

- Keep your feet clear of the wheels, even when loading.
- Stay alert to pinch point hazards to prevent injuries to your hands.
- Stick to designated traffic lanes, and stop and look at intersections.

4. Riding Not Allowed

- Don’t ride on a cart made for a walking operator.
- Never carry passengers.

5. Push It!

- Unless the cart is designed for pulling, push it.
- It’s easier on your back!

6. Loading and Unloading

- Bend your knees instead of your back.
- Don’t pick up more than you can easily handle.

7. Smooth Operator

- Keep the handcart ahead of you when going down a hill.
- Stay away from the edges of loading docks or other platforms.
- Make sure the dock plate and landing strip are wide enough to accommodate the cart’s wheels.

8. PPE Please

- Wear your PPE- gloves and safety shoes, and other PPE required to protect against the material being handled and other hazards.

9. Free Parking

- Park and store handcarts where they will not create tripping hazards.
- Don’t block exits or emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers.

FINAL WORD

Just as its name implies, a handcart is a handy piece of equipment. Following a few simple tips can help you use them safely.