Supply-Chain Hazards: Global Inputs, Local Impact and Hidden Risks Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

When materials, parts, and equipment travel from suppliers across the country or around the world, the hazards travel with them. A shortcut taken at a factory overseas, a mislabeled chemical drum, or a damaged shipping container can show up at your loading dock and put you in harm’s way. Supply-chain risk isn’t somebody else’s problem — it lands in your hands the moment you open the box.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

You can’t always see what’s been done to a product before it reaches you. Substitutions, missing paperwork, and damaged goods are now common, and any of them can turn a routine task into a serious incident.

Mislabeled or Undeclared Chemicals

- Drums marked one product but containing another
- Missing or non-English Safety Data Sheets
- Lithium batteries shipped without hazmat paperwork

Damaged Shipments and Unstable Loads

Containers and pallets often arrive crushed, leaking, or shifted. Opening them blind risks crush injuries, chemical exposure, and falling objects.

Biological and Pest Contamination

- Wood pallets carrying pests, mold, or fungus
- Rodent contamination in food and packaging
- Stowaway insects, some venomous, in imported goods

Pressure and Substitution Risk

Shortages push teams to substitute unfamiliar materials and rush jobs. New

chemicals, unfamiliar tools, and tight deadlines are a setup for shortcuts.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Treat every incoming shipment like it might not be what the paperwork says — because sometimes it isn't.

Verify Before You Use It

- Check PPE and safety-rated parts for proper certification marks (CSA, ANSI, UL)
- Reject anything missing labels, batch numbers, or traceable origin
- When in doubt, source from approved suppliers only

Check the Paperwork

Make sure every chemical comes with a current Safety Data Sheet in a language your team can read. If the SDS is missing or doesn't match what's on the drum, stop and escalate before opening.

Inspect Before You Open

- Walk around containers and pallets before cutting straps
- Look for leaks, bulges, crushed corners, or shifted loads
- Use proper PPE: gloves, eye protection, and respiratory protection when needed

Watch for Pests and Biologicals

- Inspect wood pallets for borer holes, mold, or droppings
- Quarantine suspect shipments — don't bring them indoors
- Report any insect or rodent activity immediately

Push Back on Pressure

Substitutions need a real review, not a verbal shrug. If you're being asked to use an unfamiliar chemical, tool, or part, ask for the SDS, the spec sheet, and a quick toolbox talk before starting.

Act Fast

- Stop work immediately if a container leaks, smokes, or gives off an unusual smell
- Move people upwind and away from the area
- Call your supervisor and follow your spill or hazmat response plan
- Don't try to "wipe it up" or move it yourself — wait for the right team and the right equipment

FINAL WORD

A long supply chain doesn't excuse a short safety check. The few minutes you spend inspecting, verifying, and questioning what shows up on your dock can save a life, maybe yours.