Unloading Trailers (Construction) Meeting Kit

Every day an untold amount of loads of various materials, tools, equipment, etc. are transported and offloaded at construction sites all around the world. While the task of taking a load off of a trailer is usually a straightforward process, there are many things to consider. There needs to be proper preplanning to ensure a safe and efficient process.

PREPLANNING AND COMMUNICATION

Proper preplanning and communication to all those involved in the task is critical to ensure the process of receiving loads at the job site goes smoothly. **Two major things to consider:**

The load itself- What is exactly showing up on each trailer and how is it loaded? What tools, equipment, personnel, etc. will be needed to safely get the load off of the trailer? Work with the trucking company ahead of time to understand how the load is being shipped and what is required to get the load off the trailer at the jobsite.

Driver expectations- Things such as entry point to the site, delivery times, speed limit, escort requirements, PPE requirements, truck and trailer requirements, phone numbers, hazards, etc. are just some items that need to be discussed with the trucking companies delivering materials. An effective way to communicate these items is to provide a journey management planning document to the trucking company stating any important information needed for the drivers. The drivers should then review and sign the document and have it with them when they come onto site.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- Load trucks and trailers so it does not endanger people loading or unloading the material.
- Equipment and material loads on trucks and trailers must be properly secured so that they will not shift or fall off during transportation or unloading.
- Loads such as gravel, stone, soil, must be contained or secured to prevent

leakage, spilling, blow off, falls.
- Safety precautions to be taken while loading and unloading of materials:
- Safe methods of loading and unloading must be communicated to the crews, including the nature of the load and how it should be properly loaded, secured and unloaded.
- Among the many hazards that construction workers face are those associated with the unloading of trailers. There are endless numbers of deliveries to construction sites throughout every shift, each posing unique hazards. No load comes without risks, and employers owe it to their workers to plan appropriately for every shipment that arrives.

COMMON HAZARDS DURING UNLOADING

There is an endless list of potential dangers you might face during the process of unloading trailers. While each load may pose unique hazards, you might avoid injuries if you learn more about the following common risks and take the necessary precautions to stay safe:

- **Caught-in or between hazards:** Be cautious whenever heavy equipment is present, to avoid being caught or trapped between it and another object.
- **Slip or trip-and-fall hazards:** These dangers exist whenever you climb on or off the trailer, and random packing material, straps and chains can cause you to trip and fall.
- **Struck-by hazards:** This is the most common cause of injuries during unloading of trailers. Both the load and unloading equipment can cause severe struck-by injuries.
- **Pinch-point hazards:** An endless list of pinch points exist when lifting objects during the unloading process and also during the stacking or placing of the materials on the job site.

Unloading trailers has many hazards. Most of us have seen or heard of items falling off a trailer during the unloading process. Taking the time to follow the proper precautions can save a life, injury, or damage to a much-needed part.

SAFETY TIPS:

- A load traveling down a highway at 70 mph should always be examined for stability prior to putting oneself in harm’s way. Visually check to see that the stacks are in vertical alignment and the wood dunnage is still in place.
- Having the correct equipment is essential too. Lifting equipment should be of the appropriate capacity for the material being lifted and one of the correct designs for site conditions. Operators of the lifting equipment should be trained and familiar with their operation.
- Prior to unloading, a general plan should be developed on how to best remove the layers, where the parts will be placed, and the best route of travel. Chose a level spot for unloading trailers and have a route. Pick a route that is free of dips and drops that could cause a load to shift.
- Before removing anything, watch out for the people around you such as helpers, drivers, and other employees. Truck drivers are usually in a rush to be unloaded and, sometimes, will try to “help” with the unloading process. The lift operator should ensure that no one is near the trailer when they are removing materials. Otherwise, a simple mistake could

seriously injure someone. It is best to let the driver know that you want and expect him to remain in the cab of the truck during the unloading process.
- Make sure the trailer ramp is long enough to avoid steep angles when loading or unloading the equipment.
- The mobile equipment operator should be experienced in operating the equipment being loaded or unloaded, and should be trained in how to safely load or unload the equipment off trailers.
- Workers on foot around equipment being loaded and unloaded should be alert to the movement of both the equipment being loaded or unloaded.
- Have a spotter to provide directions to the operator in positioning the equipment while loading/unloading.
- The flatbed truck should have brakes set and motor turned off.

FINAL WORD

Unloading materials, tools, and equipment from a truck or trailer may seem like a straightforward process at face value, but there are many things to consider. Proper preplanning is a critical best practice in preventing incidents during this type of work task.