



Hand Trucks

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It wouldn't be too inaccurate to say that when you've seen one two-wheeled hand truck, you've seen them all. They all look pretty much the same. But there can be a big difference in the way each should be handled to do a job safely.

Persons using hand trucks should know their trucks and the types of jobs they are designed to handle. This is necessary for safe usage. We've all loaded trucks with boxes and stacked them so high that the top box rested right under our chin. The time lost trying to make this juggling act work should prove that the smaller, safer load is the better way.

- ⊗ Two of the more common types of injuries associated with hand trucks are injured hands and feet. So, gloves should be worn to protect your hands and, if any of you have ever gotten in the way of a loaded truck and had its wheels run over your big toe, you know why safety shoes are important. Don't try to hold a truck in place with your foot. It will result in an injury sooner or later.

Well-equipped hand trucks have hand brakes and knuckle guards. Hand truck should be kept in good repair and inspected daily before use. It's a good idea to keep maintenance records for each piece of equipment, recording lubrication dates and other work. Generally, when operating two-wheeled hand trucks, these procedures should be followed:

- √ Keep the center of gravity of the load as low as possible. Put heavy objects below the lighter ones. When loading, keep feet clear of the wheels.
- √ Place the load well forward so the weight will be carried by the axle, not the handles.
- √ The load should be placed so that it won't shift or topple. Allow for a clear view ahead.
- √ If a two wheeled truck is ever loaded in a horizontal position, raise it by using leg muscles, keeping your back straight. Do the same when setting the load down.

- √ The truck should carry the load while the operator merely pushes and balances. Never walk backwards with a hand truck on level surfaces. When going down an incline, keep the truck ahead; when going up, keep it behind.
- √ Hand trucks should not be used where there is an incline of more than 5 degrees.
- √ Move at safe speeds and keep the truck under control.

These same operating procedures also apply to four-wheeled trucks. But more care must be used in loading four-wheeled trucks to prevent their tipping. Four-wheeled trucks should be pushed rather than pulled, except a truck with a fifth wheel and a handle for pulling.

Truck handles should be left so they won't cause tripping accidents or won't be in the way of persons walking or working nearby. Fifth wheel trucks should have a wheel chained to the frame to keep the truck from moving when left standing.

The people who study accident statistics have pinpointed the main hazards which truckers are confronted with. They are running wheels off bridge plates or platforms, colliding with other trucks or obstructions, and jamming between the truck and doorjamb or other objects.

Special care should be taken at blind corners and doorways. When hand trucks aren't in use, they should be stored in designated places where they won't form obstructions or tripping hazards. Two-wheeled trucks should be stored on the chisel with handles leaning against the wall or the next truck. Wheels of trucks not in use should be locked.

- ☛ Hand trucks make many jobs easier and because of this we're inclined to take them for granted. After all, it's easy to get careless with a piece of equipment that doesn't chop, punch, or run with a loud roar. But, the potential dangers involved in hand truck operation have to be recognized and dealt with the same as with any other equipment.

So stay in control, be alert, and watch your clearances!

