

5

minute safety talk



Conveyor Safe Practices

Although conveyors may look straightforward, there are actually many hazards involved in their operation. Moving machine parts, dangerous cargo, and operator error can result in serious harm to employees. Unfortunately, workers who are around them every day may begin to take these dangers for granted. Employees must be continuously reminded of the risks associated with conveyors and proper methods for minimizing injury.

First and foremost, it must be determined if the conveyor meets the proper standards and has the safety features expected in terms of the design, manufacture, and installation. Once a conveyor is installed, supervisors should conduct a hazard analysis and eliminate all identified safety risks. A detailed task analysis for employees should also be developed, outlining all conveyor-related responsibilities.

Other primary functions of conveyors must also be reviewed, while taking into account the major factors that can contribute to injury: pinch points, falling objects, human misjudgment, and maintenance mishaps.

Start/Stop Buttons

One of the most important safety features of a conveyor is how it starts and stops. Conveyors may have a single start and stop button, buttons at several locations, or a stop cord that runs the length of the conveyor. Whatever the configuration, it's important the buttons are clearly marked and employees are trained on proper use.

When a conveyor is stopped for servicing and repairs, it should be correctly locked out. It should only be restarted by a trained, authorized worker after everyone has cleared the area and all start-up procedures have been implemented.

Nip and Shear Points

Places where hands and tools can get caught present a dangerous hazard. Precautions include:

- Guarding nip and shear points to avoid worker contact.
- Closing all moving parts that drive the conveyor, such as chains, sprockets, belts, and pulleys.
- Using safety features such as rollers that pop out to prevent pinching, end caps on rotating shafts, labels that warn workers of danger spots, and interlocked safety switches that automatically stop the conveyor system in case of jams or when a hinged section is opened.

Cargo

It's not enough to just guard the conveyor. You must also guard what the conveyor is carrying. Some safety measures:

- Install suspended safeguarding under overhead conveyors to help capture falling objects.
- Clearly mark the height on low-clearance conveyors.
- Remind workers not to jeopardize safety by clearing off the conveyor before it has stopped. Conveyors that carry materials with sharp edges, such as scrap metal, are particularly dangerous.
- Eliminate work sites at the receiving end of any conveyor to discourage workers from taking hazardous shortcuts when unloading.

Worker Training

Supervisors must raise awareness on the dangers of conveyors, as some employees do not recognize the risks. Make sure workers respect the equipment and do not take shortcuts such as walking on, riding, or crossing over conveyors. Proper training is essential. It should be continuous and cover topics such as general safety instructions, importance of guards, acceptable work attire and protective equipment, and proper servicing techniques. Conveyor safety needs to be made a priority, and supervisors must ensure all safety requirements are strictly enforced.