

## **news & notes**

### **NIOSH ON NOISE**

A new study from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) looks at the effect of occupational noise exposure in contributing to both permanent hearing loss and tinnitus. The NIOSH study is the first to look at occupationally induced tinnitus.

NIOSH used the 2007 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)—which includes detailed self-reported information from workers on hearing difficulty, tinnitus, and exposures to occupational noise—to generate its estimates. According to the NHIS data, the incidence of hearing difficulty among workers who had never been exposed to occupational noise was 7 percent.

In that same group, 5 percent reported tinnitus, and 2 percent reported having both conditions. Among workers who had at any point in their working life been exposed to occupational noise, the incidence of both conditions was much higher: 23 percent reported hearing difficulty, 15 percent reported tinnitus, and 9 percent reported both.



**“Hi, Susan. Would you happen to know: How much wood could a woodchuck hand-truck if a woodchuck hand-trucked wood?”**



**October 2018**

### **Using hand trucks safely**

#### *Safe practices for working with hand trucks*

Hand trucks are simple pieces of equipment that can be extremely helpful when moving boxes and other heavy objects. Proper use of a hand truck can help prevent strains, sprains, and other lifting-related injuries. However, hand trucks are not without hazards of their own, so use them carefully, and follow safe work practices.

#### **Inspecting**

Before you use a hand truck, inspect it. If it has air-filled tires, check that the air pressure is correct; if it has hard rubber tires, make sure they are in good condition. Examine the frame for broken or bent areas, and check for any loose or damaged bolts or other parts. Wheels should turn easily; if the hand truck is equipped with brakes, make sure they work.

#### **Loading**

When you load the hand truck, always place heavier objects or boxes on the bottom of the stack, with lighter objects on top. Check the rated weight capacity of the hand truck, and don't go over it. Don't load the hand truck with more weight than you can safely manage, even if the equipment can handle it. Never stack items so high that you cannot see over the top. If the load is not stable, secure it to the hand truck with a strap.

#### **Safe use**

Follow these safe practices for using a hand truck:

- Get a firm grip on the handle. Wear work gloves with slip-resistant coatings. Do not operate hand trucks when your hands or the handles are wet or greasy.
- Maintain good back posture by keeping your back straight and bending your knees. Push the hand truck rather than pull it whenever possible, and do not walk backward.
- Allow the hand truck to carry the weight so that you only need to push and steer. Two-wheeled hand trucks should be tilted back just enough so that the weight is balanced on the wheels. Tilting back too far will require you to support too much of the load.
- Travel at a safe speed to avoid obstacles such as debris, wet floors, or uneven floors. Maintain the speed required to keep the hand truck under control. Keep an eye out for other vehicles, equipment or structures, edges of docks, trip hazards, pedestrians, etc.
- When operating on a ramp or inclined surface, keep the load downhill if possible. This will prevent the load from rolling over or falling on top of you if you lose control. However, avoid using hand trucks on very steep inclines.
- Keep your feet clear of the wheels when using hand trucks.
- Do not ride on a hand truck, and never carry a passenger.
- Protect your hands from being crushed against solid objects. Watch for pinch points when you go through doorways or other tight areas.
- Park hand trucks in appropriate places. Keep them out of main walkways, and do not block emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers or exits.

## Working around forklifts

Even when not driving a forklift, it's important for you to understand how to stay safe when working around or near a forklift. Follow these safety tips when working near forklifts:

- Always be alert for forklift activity in your work area, and keep track of where forklifts are and what they are doing at all times.
- Avoid getting too close to forklifts while you work.
- Listen for horns, backup alarms, and other warnings.
- Look both ways before crossing aisles and obey traffic signs.
- Use pedestrian walkways, and remain behind barriers when available.
- Don't assume that forklift operators will always see you.
- Wear high-visibility clothing when working around forklifts.
- Take extra care in noisy work areas where you might not hear forklift horns, backup alarms, and other warnings.
- Never try to "beat" a forklift or try to slip by a moving forklift.
- Obey safety rules and never hitch a ride on a forklift or ride on the forks.
- Avoid walking or standing under raised forks even if they're empty.
- Avoid standing where you could be crushed between a forklift and a structure, like a wall, column, storage rack, or piece of equipment.
- Refrain from engaging in horseplay when working around forklifts and don't distract forklift operators.



[www.firstbenefits.org](http://www.firstbenefits.org)  
(888) 393-2667

## Using hand trucks safely: Quiz

1. If you are able to push the hand truck, you do not need to inspect it. **True or False**
2. You should place heavier objects or boxes on the bottom of the stack on hand trucks. **True or False**
3. When using a hand truck, you should:
  - A. Maintain good back posture by keeping your back straight and bending your knees.
  - B. Run or walk fast with the hand truck to handle tasks more efficiently.
  - C. Always keep the load uphill from you when operating on a ramp or inclined surface.
4. You should stack the items as high as you need to. **True or False**
5. You should park your hand truck in the middle of aisles so that you know where it is. **True or False**

### Answers

**1. False.** You must inspect the hand truck before you use it. Check the tires is correct, examine the frame, and check for any loose or damaged parts. **2. True.** Place heavier objects or boxes on the bottom of the stack and lighter objects on top when loading a hand truck. **3. A. Maintain good back posture** by keeping your back straight and bending your knees. Travel at a safe speed and keep the load downhill if possible when operating on a ramp or inclined surface. **4. False.** Never stack items so high that you cannot see over the top. Also, make sure to secure the load to the hand truck if it is not stable. **5. False.** Don't park your hand truck in main walkways, and do not block emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers or exits.

---

## National Protect Your Hearing Month

### *What you need to know*

Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common work-related illness in the United States. The level of risk is influenced by several factors, including:

- **Noise level.** As levels increase, the risk of hearing loss also increases.
- **Duration of exposure.** Longer exposure means more hazardous.
- **Impulsiveness.** Noises that have very abrupt starts and stops (such as hammering, gunfire, or fireworks) are more dangerous than constant noise of the same overall level.
- **Intermittency.** Periods of relative quiet between exposures allow the ear to rest and reduce the risk.

Exposure to certain chemicals can also cause hearing loss. These include:

- Organic solvents such as toluene, styrene, xylene, ethylbenzene, and trichloroethane;
- Heavy metals such as mercury and lead;
- Asphyxiants such as carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide; *and*
- Endocrine disrupters such as acrylonitrile.

Take these precautions to protect your hearing:

- Wear approved hearing protectors.
- Limit your exposure to loud noise—at work and at home.
- Keep machinery and equipment well-maintained to reduce noise.
- Report sources of excessive noise to a supervisor.