

Loading Dock Safety Tips

The ATA Safety & Loss Prevention Management Council and Baldwin & Lyons, Inc. advise drivers and other workers to protect themselves and others by following these safety tips on and/or around loading docks.

- Know and follow your company procedures.
- Stay alert and do the job right. Short cuts cause losses and injury.
- Communicate with dock and other workers before you back into or pull away from a dock.
- Get out of the truck and look at the surroundings before backing, and watch for other vehicles, debris, chuck holes, overhangs and pedestrians.
- Back the truck slowly and use a reliable guide when necessary.
- Never jump from a dock, trailer or tractor; use the 3-point system to avoid slips and falls.
- Secure open, swinging trailer doors before backing or pulling out of a dock, unless required otherwise.
- Set vehicle brakes before loading/unloading.
- Secure trailer by using wheel chocks, mechanical dock locking system or vehicle restraining device, so the trailer does not shift forward or “walk.”
- If wheel chocks are used, chock the rearmost axle on a tandem-axle trailer. The force of a forklift entering the trailer exerts a downward force, helping to pin the wheels more than if the front axle is chocked.
- If the front axle is chocked, the forward motion of a forklift entering a trailer can move the chock forward, allowing the trailer to pick up momentum and jump the chock.
- Leave the tractor hooked to the trailer, unless instructed otherwise.
- The trailer must be adequately lit during loading/unloading.
- Do not permit nonessential personnel to be in the trailer during loading/unloading.
- If physically loading/unloading freight, use proper lift jack and lifting techniques to prevent injury.

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- If the tractor is removed, place supports or jack stands under the trailer nose (forward of landing gear), especially on “pup” trailers, to prevent tipping when a forklift and/or load is in the trailer nose.
- When opening the doors of a loaded trailer, open them slowly with a strong hold and grip on the door so any unsecured freight will not fall on you or others.
- Install and check the dock plate or levelers to make sure the trailer is square with the dock and the plate is overlapping sufficiently and is secure. If possible, make certain the plate/leveler is rated for the appropriate weight capacity and service range/height differential needed for safe loading and unloading of your freight.
- Inspect the trailer floor to verify it can support the weight of the industrial truck and freight.
- Stay clear of forklifts, pallet jacks and other machinery. Many companies have safety lines painted on their dock floors designating safe walking areas versus work areas.
- Do not operate machinery, such as a forklift or electric/motorized pallet jack, unless you are certified on the specific equipment and authorized by your company.
- Never permit a trailer to be pulled away from the dock until you are absolutely certain the loading/unloading process is completed and the trailer is vacated.
- If possible, look into the trailer to ensure all is clear and secured to prevent any re-entry. Check with a supervisor or dock representative for assistance.
- Verify the load is secure before leaving the dock and driving down the road. Periodically recheck as required and when possible.

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