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Unloading Trailers (Construction) Safety Talk

Everyday 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. Just like any other task, there needs to be proper preplanning to ensure a safe and efficient process.

Preplanning the Unloading Process

There are many things that need to be considered before load just shows up to site. 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:

1. 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.
2. Driver expectations- Do the drivers of the trucks coming onto site understand what is expected of them? 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. It is necessary to state the importance of safety to the drivers while they are at your worksite.

Common Hazards During Unloading Trailers

There are plenty of hazards when dealing with offloading trailers. Variables such as work site setup, equipment used, material being offloaded, type of trailer, etc. will determine what the specific hazards are for the task. There are common hazards for unloading activities that can be mentioned here:

- Struck-by hazards are one of the biggest concerns during a work task that involves unloading a trailer. There can be many struck-by hazards including the actual load or moving equipment.
- Slips, trips, falls also are a concern. Climbing on and off the trailer poses fall hazards to those individuals assisting in offloading. Poor housekeeping or equipment such as straps or chains on the ground can pose many trip hazards.
- Pinch points hazards are also common while unloading trailers. Pinch points are abundant when dealing with lifting objects as well as during the staging of materials onsite.

- Caught-in or between hazards are present any time there is heavy equipment moving or the load is being moved.

Summary

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. Evaluate how you are currently unloading trailers and see what improvements can be made to make the task safer and go more efficiently. *Discussion point: How can we mitigate some of these hazards?*