

## WAREHOUSE SAFETY

### Reducing the Risk of Accidents



**Warehouse accidents are often due to a combination of factors ranging from poor layout design to inadequate safety protocols. Understanding these inter-connected factors is the first step toward creating a safer and more efficient workplace.**

#### FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS WAREHOUSE ACCIDENTS

##### **Inadequate Traffic Flow and Congestion**

When pathways are not clearly marked or are too narrow, it can lead to congestion, which increases the likelihood of collisions and accidents. This is particularly dangerous when heavy machinery, such as forklifts, is involved.

##### **Lack of Clear Signage**

The lack or absence of clear and visible signage can result in confusion and disorientation. This can be especially hazardous in areas where specific safety protocols must be followed or where dangerous materials are stored.

##### **Absence of Designated Walkways**

Without designated walkways, pedestrians are forced to share space with machinery and vehicles, increasing the risk of accidents. Designated walkways ensure that foot traffic is separated from machinery, reducing the likelihood of collisions.

##### **Material Handling and Machinery Operation**

Improper training or lack of awareness regarding the correct procedures for handling materials and operating machinery can lead to severe accidents. This includes everything from lifting techniques to the operation of heavy machinery, such as forklifts.

##### **Importance of Risk Assessment**

Failing to conduct regular risk assessments can result in overlooked hazards. These assessments are crucial for identifying potential dangers and implementing preventive measures.

The above factors are often interconnected, and not isolated issues. It is therefore important to adopt a holistic approach, which considers the entire warehouse layout, as well as operational protocols, when addressing them.

#### STRATEGIES FOR A SAFER WAREHOUSE ENVIRONMENT

- Keep pedestrian and machinery traffic separate, by designing well-thought-out pathways and implementing one-way lanes, to significantly reduce the risk of accidents.
- Prioritise clear signage and visual communication, including hazard warnings, emergency exits and multilingual signs for a diverse workforce, to guide workers and prevent accidents.
- Consider installing mirrors and adequate lighting to mitigate risks and improve visibility.
- Engage with the workforce, as they can offer valuable insights into practical safety issues and designing signage/pathways, that might be overlooked in a top-down approach.
- Implement comprehensive and ongoing training (machinery operation, as well as material handling), complemented by ergonomic equipment design.
- Conduct regular risk assessments in order to identify potential hazards. These need to be backed up by strong safety protocols that guide employees in various situations.
- Create emergency awareness with clearly marked escape routes and regular drills, to ensure that everyone knows what to do in the case of an emergency.
- Strive to continuously improve safety measures, including regular audits and safety protocol updates.

#### A SAFE WAREHOUSE IS AN EFFICIENT WAREHOUSE

Employees who feel safe are more likely to be focused and more efficient. Ergonomically designed workspaces and equipment also contribute to this by reducing physical strain, thereby allowing workers to perform their tasks more effectively.

**CONTACT US TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES FOR YOUR BUSINESS:**

- EHS Risk Assessments
- Occupational Hygiene Surveys
- Ergonomics Surveys
- EHS Management System Development and Implementation
- Environmental Monitoring
- Identification of EHS Legal Requirements and Compliance Audits
- Construction EHS Services
- Construction H&S Files
- Internal Auditor Training
- General EHS Training



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www.safetech.co.za

### Southern Office

PO Box 27607  
Greenacres  
Port Elizabeth  
6057

Tel: +27 (0)41 365 6846  
info@safetech.co.za

### Northern Office

PO Box 80171  
Doornpoort  
Pretoria  
0017

Tel: +27 (0)82 4111 571  
carlita.westoby@safetech.co.za



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and Labour Approved  
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(OH0049-CI-09)



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## The Importance of an Effective Respiratory Protection Program

A respiratory protection program is more than just issuing respirators to make sure they are providing the protection employees require. It also includes ensuring that workers understand the hazards and have the right types of respirators and filters/cartridges, and that they know how to use and maintain them correctly.

People may hold onto respirators and cartridges for years, without knowing that the chemical cartridges inside has a limited shelf life and must be replaced regularly.

While respirator designs have seen limited changes, recent advances in managing respiratory protection programs and emerging trends have been driving improvements in this field.

- Post-pandemic research has focused efforts on improving the comfort and efficacy of respirators, which are crucial for safeguarding healthcare workers from airborne infections.
- Advances in materials science and ergonomic design have resulted in respirators that offer enhanced breathability and improved fit, minimising discomfort during prolonged use.
- The increased emphasis on respiratory protection in healthcare has paved the way for cross-industry learning, where strategies employed in medical settings are adapted to other occupational exposures.

Inadequate respiratory protection exposes workers to various health risks, including inhaling harmful chemicals and mechanical damage caused by particulate matter. Additionally, substances like crystalline silica, when inhaled, can penetrate deep into the lungs and cause mechanical damage.

Training on the correct use, maintenance, limitations, and storage of respirators is very important. Employees should be able to inspect, put on, adjust and remove respirators correctly, as well as identify the signs of a compromised seal or malfunctioning equipment.



## i WASH STATIONS

Emergency eyewash stations are central to the safety of everyone around them.

They provide a first line of defense against dangerous burns and eye damage from chemicals, debris and other irritants. It is therefore extremely important that these fundamental pieces of safety equipment are maintained, flushed and checked regularly to ensure that they work properly, when needed.

Emergency eyewash stations are simple, and yet they are vital and effective for ensuring the safety of people working with corrosive chemicals. Quickly flushing and diluting chemicals from the eyes can reduce or prevent the damage these chemicals can cause.

### Training

Training and education is necessary, to ensure that after the initial “push the valve and flush your eyes,” the proper actions are taken i.e. holding your eyes open and flushing for 15 minutes. Training someone on how to use an emergency eyewash station is straightforward, but monitoring the system means knowing how to assess the situation quickly to ensure that the person using the station gets any help they might need and also to ensure that the qualified First Aider responds as quickly as possible.

### Choose the Correct Safety Eyewear to Prevent Injury

According to NIOSH, 2000 workers sustain eye injuries at work every day. About one-third of these injuries require medical attention at a hospital. The most common eye injuries are striking/scraping, penetration and chemical/thermal burns.

There are several features, across various types of safety eyewear, that have an impact on their function and practical use. Worker preference also plays a role in which eyewear features matter. However the most important feature in selecting the appropriate eyewear is safety standards.

**Safety eyewear sold within South Africa is now subject to EN166 (SABS adoption: SANS 50166:2018) The South African standard has adopted the European standard.**