Material handling and storage

Before the move: a short toolbox talk for today's job

Discuss manual handling, clear travel routes and stable storage. Crane, rigging and powered-truck work need their own task-specific procedures and required training.

1. Plan the move

Name the load, destination and handling method. Check its size, grip and stability, carrying distance, awkward reaches and repeated lifts. Can a layout change or suitable handling equipment reduce manual lifting?

2. Clear the route and landing area

Keep aisles and passageways clear and in good repair. Allow safe equipment clearance at doors, turns and loading docks. Identify pedestrian routes, obstructions and where the load will be set down. Do not start with an obstructed route.

3. Make storage stable

Secure tiered materials against sliding or collapse. Check rack and shelf condition and load limits. Report damaged racking and isolate the affected area. In construction, stored loads must also stay within the maximum safe load limits of floors.

4. Stop when conditions change

Stop if a load shifts, the route becomes blocked or storage looks unstable. Have the supervisor review the plan before restarting. Do not improvise a lift or try to catch falling materials.

Ask the crew

- What is today's most difficult load, and can we avoid lifting it manually?
- Where could someone be struck, trapped or exposed to falling materials?
- Which route and storage area will we use? Who will fix hazards before the move?

Make it specific to this job

Task / load: _____

Route / storage area: _____

Hazard / action / person responsible: _____

_____

Sources and limits

General industry: 29 CFR 1910.176. Construction: 29 CFR 1926.250. Practical guidance: OSHA Warehousing: Hazards and Solutions. Sources apply to different work settings; check the rules for your operation. Links are clickable. Reviewed November 3, 2026.

General safety information only. This discussion aid does not replace required training, a site-specific hazard assessment, employer procedures or qualified advice. Attendance is not proof of competence.

Resources and separate attendance sheet: toolboxtalk.com/toolbox-talk-template/