

# Wheelbarrow Safety

Wheelbarrows don't have any motorized parts or sharp edges and are simple to use. But wheelbarrows have caused some serious injuries.

The proper use and maintenance of wheelbarrows can prevent many accidents. Anytime you balance a heavy load on a single wheel, you must pay attention to what you are doing.

Because there's no top to a wheelbarrow, some workers may think they can keep loading it as long as the material doesn't fall out. But overloading a wheelbarrow is a sure way to lose control of it or end up with muscle strain (musculoskeletal disorders).

## What happened?

A guy was working on a construction site. He loaded up the wheelbarrow with demolished building materials of ununiform size and weights.

He lifted the wheelbarrow and attempted to push forward. The load was unbalanced, and the wheelbarrow began to tip to one side.

To gain control of the toppling wheelbarrow he fought with the load to the and compensate for the uncontrolled movement. Unfortunately, as he had begun to walk, he had his right foot forward and the load was falling to the left. Despite his efforts to balance the load it was too heavy and continued to fall to the ground.

As the load was falling, he was trying to save the load but the force of the load falling downward was far greater than the force he was exerting upward. This awkward and building inertia was too great and ended up tearing the worker's shoulder muscle on the way down. The momentum also caused the worker to topple over with the wheelbarrow and as he was going down and the right handle was coming up smacked him in the face and fractured his jaw.

## How could this incident have been avoided?

## Safety Tips

- Only put in a wheelbarrow the amount of weight you can physically handle on a hill or when turning a corner
- Always place the load well forward, balanced and confined in size for safety
- Balance your load over the wheel for good control
- The load should clear safely through openings, aisles and roadways
- The user should be able to see over and around the load to guide it safely
- The load should be secured, or held steady, against shifting or falling if it is not confined within the bucket of the barrow
- When you raise and lower the handles of a wheelbarrow, treat them like any other heavy load you lift. Keep your back straight and bend your knees for lifting instead of bending your back
- Always push a loaded wheelbarrow forward. This is the way to avoid being run over. Warn others out of the way. A walking pace is safer than running.
- Keep a tight grip on the handles
- Cross over obstacles at the right angle, especially over rails or planks which may divert the wheel causing the load to spill or fall
- If you lose control of a wheelbarrow, let go of the handles and shout a warning to others.
- The wheelbarrow wheel or wheels should be inspected and maintained regularly. Maintain proper lubrication according to directions. Inspect tires for damage. Keep tires inflated according to directions. Keep all bolts and fittings tight and secure
- A wheelbarrow by itself will not harm you or anyone else. You are responsible for how well a wheelbarrow is handled, operated, maintained and stored for safety

# TOOLBOX TALK

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