



Loading Dock Safety Tips

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



- **Do not permit nonessential personnel** to be in the trailer during loading and unloading.
- **Do not operate machinery**, such as a forklift or electric or 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 or unloading process is completed and the trailer is vacated.



- **Communicate with and receive approval from dock and other workers** before you back into or pull away from a dock.
- **Get out of the truck and look at your surroundings** before backing and watch for other vehicles, debris, chuck holes, overhangs and pedestrians.
- **Secure open, swinging trailer doors before backing or pulling out of a dock.**
- **Back the truck slowly** and use a reliable guide when necessary. Honk your horn before backing.
- **Set vehicle brakes before loading and unloading.**
- **Secure the trailer by using wheel chocks**, a mechanical dock locking system or other vehicle restraining devices 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.
- **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.
- **Install and check the dock plate or levelers to make sure the trailer is square with the dock and the plate is secure and overlapping sufficiently.** If possible, make certain the plate or leveler is rated for the appropriate weight capacity, service range and height differential needed for safe loading and unloading of your freight.
- **The trailer must be adequately lit during loading and unloading.**
- If you are physically loading or unloading freight, **use proper lift jack and lifting techniques to prevent injury.**
- **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.** Periodically recheck as required by company and federal regulations.
- **Open trailer doors slowly with a strong hold** and grip on the door so any unsecured freight will not fall on you or others.
- **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.