Introduction
How safe is your loading dock? Accidents in loading dock areas range from property damage, equipment damage, injuries, and even fatalities. Workers in the area of loading docks must not only be mindful of what they are doing, but also be aware of the actions of those around them, especially forklifts and other forms of material handling equipment.

Definitions
Loading dock – a designated area of a building where goods are loaded onto and unloaded from vehicles

Powered industrial truck (forklift) – a mobile, power-propelled vehicle used to carry, push, pull, lift, stack, or tier material
Discussion

Ask the group to list the leading causes of fatalities in loading dock areas. Examples include a worker being struck by a moving forklift, crushed by an overturned forklift, or falling from a loading dock.

Ask what contributing factors lead to these events, and what can be done to prevent incidents? Examples include policies and procedures, employee education and training, lighting, dock barriers, visual signs, audible alarms and sensors.

Loading docks

- **Employee training** – All employees should be trained on loading dock safety and safety polices need to be enforced.
- **Employee and driver access** – Mark floors to identify a safety walkway for pedestrian traffic, exit paths, and doorways. Provide a designated waiting area for drivers.
- **Housekeeping** – Clean dock areas to eliminate any spills and the collection of debris and materials
- **Floor surface** – Inspect and repair floors on a regular basis to prevent uneven surfaces. Use a dock seal or dock shelter to prevent rain and snow off of loading docks to prevent slippery surfaces.
- **Falls** – Protect employees from falls from open edges of the dock when the dock doors are open by using a physical barrier
- **Carbon monoxide** – Proper ventilation and carbon monoxide alarms are the best ways to monitor this issue. Have driver turn off their trucks during loading or unloading.
- **Lifting injuries** – Provide mechanical lifting devices or ergonomic equipment to help reduce bending, reaching, and stretching.

Equipment

- **Powered industrial truck** – OSHA-trained and authorized employees are the only people who can operate forklifts. This not only ensures equipment is operated safely, but also abides by the law.
- **Portable dock boards** – Ensure dock plates are capable of supporting the maximum intended load; are designed to keep from moving out of a safe position; will prevent vehicles from running off of the side edge; and have handholds for safe handling.
- **Conveyors** – Covers or guards must be functional to protect employees from pinch points and moving parts. Provide an emergency stop to disengage conveyors from the power supply where employees may come in contact with conveyors.

Cargo

- **Wheel chocks and trailer locking devices** – These devices ensure the trailer will not separate or creep from the dock accidentally. A trailer and dock separation can create a fall hazard for people and equipment.
- **Secure loads** – Before moving a product, check to make sure the product is secure. Smaller products can fall off and cause tripping hazards; if larger products are not secure, they can injure employees when falling.
- **Shifting loads** – During transit, loads can move or shift inside the trailer. Use caution when opening trailer doors in case of shifted loads or broken pallets.
- **Trailer stabilizer** – Use a trailer stabilizer jack stand if trailer is uncoupled from tractor to prevent tipping.
- **Trailer inspection** – Always inspect the floor of trailers for damage before driving on them.
Conclusion
Employees working around loading docks must raise their awareness of the risks associated with their surroundings and need to identify opportunities for improvement. The more people are trained in your loading dock safety policies and procedures, the safer this busy area will be.

Group activity
Have employees do an inspection of the dock area to look for safety hazards that might exist. Schedule a time for a group discussion of and hazards and develop solutions to eliminate the hazard. Develop a training program for all employees who enter or work in any capacity in the loading dock area, and include procedures, rules and guidelines for keeping dock areas hazard free.

Resources
OSHA 29 CFR 1910 Subpart D – Walking Working Surfaces
https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ef5647fdd3e153c420189dbf5acf45f&mc=true&node=sp29.5.1910.d&rgn=div6


OSHA eTool: Powered Industrial Trucks – Understanding the Workplace: Loading Docks

OSHA: Industry Hazards – Loading and Unloading
https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/trucking_industry/loading_unloading.html

Load Delivered Logistics: Stay Safe – 8 Tips to Ensure Loading Dock Safety
https://www.loaddelivered.com/blog/stay-safe-8-tips-to-ensure-loading-dock-safety/

WCF Insurance: Loading Dock Safety Checklist