



UNSTABLE LOADS – HOW TO IDENTIFY AND CORRECT THEM

Unstable loads are a common hazard in workplaces where materials, equipment, or supplies are moved, stacked, or stored. Whether lifting, carrying, or storing items, an unbalanced or poorly secured load can shift suddenly, leading to injuries or damage. This toolbox talk focuses on how to recognise unstable loads and what actions to take to make them safe.

Why Unstable Loads Are Dangerous

When a load is unstable, it can:

- Shift or fall unexpectedly.
- Cause loss of balance while carrying.
- Lead to crush or impact injuries.
- Damage equipment or materials.
- Create trip hazards if items fall.

Even light loads can cause serious injury if they fall or move suddenly.

How to Identify an Unstable Load

Before moving or working with any load, check for:

- Uneven weight distribution.
- Items stacked too high.
- Loose or unsecured materials.
- Leaning or tilted stacks.
- Damaged pallets or containers.
- Loads that move when touched.
- Liquids sloshing inside containers.
- Obstructed visibility when carrying.

If the load does not feel stable, it is unsafe to move.

Common Causes of Instability

Unstable loads often result from:

- Poor stacking or storage practices.
- Rushing during loading or unloading.
- Using damaged pallets or containers.
- Incorrect lifting techniques.
- Overloading trolleys or shelving.
- Failing to secure loads properly.

Taking shortcuts increases the risk.

How to Correct an Unstable Load

To make a load safe:

- Re-stack items to distribute weight evenly.
- Secure loose materials using straps or ties.
- Reduce the height of stacked items.
- Use stable and undamaged pallets or containers.
- Split heavy or awkward loads into smaller parts.
- Use trolleys or mechanical aids where possible.
- Ask for assistance with large or unstable items.

Never attempt to move a load that you cannot control.

Safe Handling Practices

When moving loads:

- Keep the load close to your body.
- Ensure a clear path before moving.
- Move slowly and steadily.
- Avoid sudden movements or turning quickly.
- Maintain good visibility at all times.

Control of the load is key to safe handling.

Summary

Unstable loads can shift or fall without warning, leading to injuries and damage. Identifying signs such as uneven weight, loose materials, or leaning stacks helps prevent incidents. Always correct unstable loads before moving them and use proper handling techniques to maintain control. A stable load is a safe load.

