



NIBA—The Belting Association
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Technical Article

Technical Article Content Pulled from the NIBA Belt Line Newsletter

Basic Conveyor Safety

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The only number of conveyor mishaps acceptable in a plant is zero. Every injury in a plant is costly, affecting worker morale, availability of trained labor, lost production, and increased overhead due to insurance premiums, mountains of paperwork, and possible fines from government regulatory agencies. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that over 50 workplace fatalities a year are the result of conveyor accidents.

Safety, like putting on a seatbelt and keeping both hands on the wheel of your car, is a habit. Good habits, like bad habits, take work to create but take more work to break. Once a culture of safety is generated in your organization it will perpetuate itself. Take the time to explain to new employees where the safety hazards are located on and around a conveyor system. Provide warning signs and reminders to keep them aware of dangers.

SAFETY TIPS

- Watch for pinch points around pulleys and idlers, especially tail pulleys and idlers as they tend to be easily accessible.
- Don't put your hands where you wouldn't put your face!
- Don't ride on a running conveyor.
- Do not sit, stand, work, or walk on a conveyor that is not locked out!
- Always use proper lockout procedures— never shortcut!
- Ensure emergency stop cables are within reach of someone caught in the conveyor.
- Ensure everyone operating or working with the conveyor is familiar with and trained on the system controls.
- Place guards over drive belts, motors, pulleys, and other rotating parts.
- When in contact with idlers, be aware of pinch points and worn-out cans with sharp edges. You can easily be hurt or become caught on these parts.
- Watch for loose or spilled materials on catwalks that may cause tripping or slipping hazards.
- Watch for debris around conveyors, on the catwalks and pretty much wherever the conveyed material is not supposed to be. The spilled material more than likely came from somewhere on the system and you don't want to get hit if additional material falls.
- Be aware that ladders and catwalks may be slippery due to rain or water spray.
- Climb ladders using 3-points of contact.

Conveyor safety is the job of everybody who approaches the system, not just those who are directly responsible for it. A conveyor is an inanimate object; it cannot feel, think, hate, or intentionally hurt someone; this means that if you get hurt on a conveyor system, at least part (and sometimes all) of the responsibility lies with you!



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Always pay attention to where you are and what you're doing as well as what other people are doing. Such situational awareness will lead you to see possible accidents before they happen and can save you and your company time, expense, and pain when an accident is prevented.

Maintaining a safe work environment requires keeping your conveyor systems clean! Do not let carryback buildup become a safety and equipment hazard. Select cleaners that minimize the risk of damage to the belt and splice, have a well-designed tensioning device that applies reasonable, level pressure across the width of the blade, and have an easily replaceable blade. Be sure to maintain the cleaner (as not maintaining it will cause damage to the belt) and remove carryback as it accrues beneath the cleaners.

Finally, be careful while walking among buildup as it is easy to lose your footing. On steep conveyors watch out for material rolling backwards and coming off the system; also be aware of electrical lines run to power motors and other equipment.

Remember, the key to conveyor safety is YOU!