

Regulatory change:

A primer on new storage rack regulations, January 1, 2018

On March 30, 2017, the WorkSafeBC Board of Directors approved changes to the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation regarding storage racks. These changes take effect January 1, 2018.

The new regulations will be in [Section 4.43.1, Storage Racks, in Part 4: General Conditions](#) and provide the requirements for employers to ensure the safety of their workers around storage racks.

The purpose of this primer is to provide an overview of the new regulations, and what employers can do to prepare for the changes in advance of January 1.

Hazards of storage racks

Steel storage racks are common workplace equipment in many different industries, such as distribution centres, warehouses, manufacturing plants, and the storage area of retail operations. There are inherent hazards associated with the racks, as they are often used to store large quantities of materials and other items. If the racks are not properly installed, maintained, and repaired, there is a risk of catastrophic failure, which can cause serious injuries and fatalities.

New requirements for steel storage racks

The new regulations apply to steel storage racks, made of steel frames, beams and associated accessories, assembled into a structure to support materials and products. For example, the most common types of steel storage racks to which the regulations apply are pallet racks and cantilever

racks. This section of the Regulation does not apply to shelving and display fixtures commonly used for retail purposes.

Exemptions to the new regulation are steel storage racks under 8 feet in height, where the materials are loaded or unloaded off the storage rack manually by workers.

Benefits for employers and workers

The new storage rack regulations offer a number of benefits for employers and workers. Currently the Regulation does not contain specific safety requirements for proper installation, inspection, and maintenance of steel storage racks. Clearly defined requirements in the Regulation will allow both employers and WorkSafeBC officers to consistently apply and interpret the various requirements to ensure storage racks are installed and used in a safe manner.

Objective of the regulatory amendment

The main objective of the new regulation, is to outline the safety requirements for storage racks in workplaces to ensure employers understand the hazards and controls associated with this common workplace equipment.

Many sections of the new regulations are not entirely new requirements, but were previously not specific to storage racks. The new regulation ensures that employers have a clear understanding of their responsibility to ensure storage racks are properly designed, installed, used and maintained.

Employers must ensure that a qualified person:

- Installs or uninstalls the storage racks
- Inspects the storage racks at regular intervals to prevent the development of unsafe working conditions

An OHS Guideline was developed to assist employers in determining the expected competencies of a qualified person. As part of regular inspections, WorkSafeBC officers will continue to inspect workplaces using a risk-based enforcement approach to ensure storage racks are maintained and in good condition, not overloaded, and used with good loading practices.

What you can do to prepare

Here's what you can do to prepare for the changes:

- Locate all storage racks in your workplace.
- Review the new regulations and determine whether they apply to your storage racks.
 - To find the new storage rack regulations, go to [Section 4.43.1 in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation \(OHSR\), Storage Racks, in Part 4: General Conditions](#).
- Review the OHS Guideline, which further explains the regulations
- Start gathering information about your storage racks, such as:
 - The storage rack manufacturer
 - If you don't know the manufacturer, look for any product identification on the storage rack (e.g., stickers or embossed markings) that may help you identify the manufacturer or the date

it was manufactured. If that doesn't work, ask manufacturers, distributors, or engineers for assistance.

- Instructions, user manuals, and any other documentation from the manufacturer
- Drawings and engineering specifications that indicate the rated capacities of the racks
- Previous inspection reports, if any
- Geotechnical reports, if any
- Records of maintenance, servicing, or repair work, if any
- If you haven't inspected your storage racks recently, start to assess the condition of all storage racks in your workplace. Based on the inspection, prioritize repairs or other maintenance as needed. Employers must ensure that repairs are done in accordance with the instructions and specifications of the manufacturer or a professional engineer.
- Develop a risk-based action plan; the plan should include short-, medium-, and long-term goals.
 - Racks in poor condition should be addressed first to ensure racks are safe for workers.
 - Racks in frequent use and those that carry hazardous products or heavy items should also be prioritized.
- Develop and implement a rack inspection and maintenance program.

For more information

- Frequently asked questions: Storage rack regulations
- The OHS Guideline on storage racks