STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Loading Dock Safety SOP

Document no.	SOP-WHS-009
Revision	1.0
Owner	Warehouse Safety Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To prevent trailer movement, fall and struck-by incidents at the loading dock by controlling how trailers are secured, how dock equipment is used, and how the dock edge is protected.

2. Scope

Applies to all dock doors, dock levelers, dock plates and trailer restraint systems used during loading and unloading. Forklift operation itself is covered by a separate SOP.

Definitions

Wheel chock	A wedge placed against a trailer's wheels to prevent it from rolling while parked at the dock.
Trailer restraint	A mechanical or hydraulic device that locks onto the trailer's rear frame or ICC bar to prevent it from pulling away from the dock.
Dock leveler	A hinged ramp that bridges the gap and height difference between the warehouse floor and the trailer bed.
Trailer creep	Gradual, unintended movement of a trailer away from the dock during loading or unloading, often from repeated forklift impact.

3. Responsibilities

Dock Attendant	Chocks wheels, engages trailer restraints, and controls dock door and leveler use during loading and unloading.
Warehouse Safety Manager	Sets dock safety procedures, audits compliance, and investigates incidents.
Forklift Operator	Confirms the trailer is secured and the leveler is engaged before driving onto a trailer.
Carrier Driver	Sets the trailer parking brake, cooperates with restraint and chocking procedures, and does not move the trailer without clearance.

RACI matrix

Activity	Dock Attendant	Warehouse Safety Manager	Forklift Operator	Carrier Driver
Secure trailer at the dock	R/A	A	I	R
Verify restraint before entry	R	A	R	I

Activity	Dock Attendant	Warehouse Safety Manager	Forklift Operator	Carrier Driver
Operate dock leveler	R/A	A	C	-
Release trailer for departure	R/A	A	I	R
Investigate a dock incident	C	R/A	C	C

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Wheel chocks
- Trailer restraint system with indicator lights
- Dock leveler and dock plate
- Dock door status signage or interlock system
- Dock safety checklist
- Barrier or safety gate for open dock doors

Personal protective equipment

- Steel-toe safety shoes
- High-visibility vest
- Hard hat where overhead hazards exist

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Confirm the trailer is parked correctly** Guide the trailer into the dock bay flush against the bumpers, and confirm the driver has set the parking brake before anyone approaches the trailer.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.2	**Chock the wheels** Place wheel chocks against both sides of the rear tires immediately after the trailer stops, before opening the trailer doors or engaging any restraint. **Checkpoint:** Wheel chocks are set against both rear tires before the dock door is opened.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.3	**Engage the trailer restraint** Engage the mechanical or hydraulic restraint onto the trailer's rear frame or ICC bar, and confirm the indicator light or gauge shows a secure, engaged status. **Warning:** Never rely on wheel chocks alone for trailers using a mechanical restraint system; both must be used together per the equipment manufacturer's instructions.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.4	**Verify the restraint status visually** Check that the interior dock light or restraint indicator shows green or 'secure' before opening the dock door, and treat a red or unclear indicator as unsafe to proceed.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.5	**Open the dock door and inspect the gap** Open the dock door fully and check the trailer floor for damage, gaps or a floor unable to support forklift traffic before extending the leveler.	Dock Attendant	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.6	**Deploy the dock leveler** Extend the dock leveler or position the dock plate to bridge the gap smoothly, confirming it is properly seated on the trailer bed before equipment crosses it. **Checkpoint:** The leveler or dock plate is fully seated and stable before any forklift crosses onto the trailer.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.7	**Confirm clearance before entering the trailer** Before driving a forklift into the trailer, visually confirm the restraint indicator is still green and the leveler is properly seated, since conditions can change if the driver moves the tractor. **Warning:** Never enter a trailer with a forklift if the restraint status is unclear, unlit or shows a fault; stop and notify the dock attendant.	Forklift Operator	☐
5.8	**Guard the open dock edge** When a dock door is open and no trailer is present, close the door or deploy a physical barrier or safety gate across the opening to prevent a fall.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.9	**Monitor for trailer creep** Periodically check the gap between the trailer and the dock bumper during extended loading, and stop work immediately if the trailer has visibly moved away from the dock.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.10	**Retract the leveler and disengage the restraint** Once loading or unloading is complete, retract the dock leveler fully, disengage the trailer restraint, and close the dock door before the trailer is released.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.11	**Release the trailer for departure** Remove the wheel chocks only after confirming the restraint is disengaged and the dock door is closed, then signal the driver that the trailer is clear to depart. **Checkpoint:** Wheel chocks are removed only after the restraint is confirmed disengaged and the dock door is closed.	Dock Attendant	☐
5.12	**Audit dock safety compliance** Walk the dock area on a set schedule to confirm restraint indicators, chocks, barriers and signage are functioning and being used correctly, and log any deficiency for repair.	Warehouse Safety Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Wheel chocks and trailer restraints are both used together on every trailer.
- Restraint indicator status is visually confirmed before any equipment enters a trailer.
- Open dock doors without a trailer present always have a closed door or barrier in place.
- Chocks are removed only after the restraint is disengaged and the door is closed.

7. Records

- Dock safety checklist per trailer
- Restraint and leveler maintenance log
- Dock safety audit results
- Incident and near-miss reports

8. KPIs

- Percentage of trailers with both chocks and restraint confirmed before unloading
- Number of dock-related incidents or near misses per month
- Dock safety audit pass rate
- Average time to repair a faulty restraint or leveler

9. Common mistakes

- Removing wheel chocks before the trailer restraint is disengaged.
- Leaving a dock door open with no trailer and no barrier in place.
- Driving a forklift onto a trailer without checking the restraint indicator.
- Assuming the driver set the parking brake without confirming it.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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