STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Warehouse Receiving SOP

Document no.	SOP-WHS-001
Revision	1.0
Owner	Receiving Supervisor
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To make sure every inbound shipment is unloaded safely, counted and inspected accurately, and recorded in the warehouse management system before it moves into storage.

2. Scope

Applies to all inbound trailers and parcel deliveries at the receiving dock, from appointment scheduling through handoff to putaway. Putaway and slotting are covered by a separate SOP.

Definitions

ASN	Advance Shipping Notice. An electronic notice from the supplier listing what is on a shipment before it arrives.
WMS	Warehouse Management System, the software used to record receipts, locations and inventory levels.
Discrepancy	Any difference between what the purchase order or ASN says should arrive and what is physically counted.
Blind receipt	A receiving count taken without the receiver seeing the expected quantity, used to reduce bias in the count.

3. Responsibilities

Receiving Clerk	Checks in trailers, unloads freight, counts and inspects goods, and enters receipts into the WMS.
Receiving Supervisor	Schedules dock appointments, resolves discrepancies and holds, and approves receipts for putaway.
Forklift Operator	Moves pallets from the trailer to the staging or inspection area using powered equipment.
Purchasing Agent	Provides purchase order details, approves quantity or price discrepancies with the supplier, and issues return authorizations.

RACI matrix

Activity	Receiving Clerk	Receiving Supervisor	Forklift Operator	Purchasing Agent
Schedule dock appointment	I	R/A	-	C
Unload and stage trailer	R	A	R	-

Activity	Receiving Clerk	Receiving Supervisor	Forklift Operator	Purchasing Agent
Count and inspect goods	R	A	-	I
Resolve discrepancy or damage	I	R/A	-	C
Release receipt to putaway	R	A	-	I

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

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- WMS terminal or handheld scanner
- Purchase order and ASN printouts or digital copies
- Receiving log or discrepancy report form
- Tape measure and calibrated scale
- Pallet jack or forklift
- Damage and shortage claim forms
- Box cutter or carton opener

Personal protective equipment

- Steel-toe or safety shoes
- High-visibility vest
- Cut-resistant gloves

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Confirm the dock appointment** Check the appointment schedule for the incoming carrier, trailer number and expected purchase order or ASN. Confirm a dock door is available before the driver arrives.	Receiving Supervisor	☐
5.2	**Check in the driver and trailer** Verify the driver's identification and bill of lading against the appointment, direct them to the assigned dock door, and chock the wheels or engage the dock lock before opening the trailer. **Warning:** Never open a trailer door or send a forklift inside before the wheels are chocked and the dock leveler is secured.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.3	**Inspect the trailer before unloading** Look inside the trailer for shifted loads, wet or crushed cartons, pest activity or a broken seal, and photograph anything unusual before touching the freight. **Checkpoint:** A broken or mismatched seal number is reported to the supervisor before unloading starts.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.4	**Unload and stage the freight** Unload pallets or cartons with a forklift or pallet jack and place them in the staging or inspection lane, keeping each purchase order's freight separate from other loads.	Forklift Operator	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.5	**Count the received quantity** Count units, cartons or pallets against the purchase order or ASN, using a blind count when your process requires it. Record the count on the receiving log or directly in the WMS handheld. **Checkpoint:** Counted quantity matches the purchase order line by line, or every variance is documented.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.6	**Inspect condition and specifications** Open a sample of cartons per your sampling plan, checking for correct item, lot or expiration date, damage, and matching specifications such as size or color.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.7	**Log discrepancies and damage** Complete a discrepancy report for any shortage, overage, wrong item or damage found, attach photographs, and route it to the receiving supervisor the same day.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.8	**Resolve holds with purchasing** Contact the purchasing agent to confirm how to handle a discrepancy: accept a partial shipment, request a credit, or prepare a return authorization for damaged goods.	Receiving Supervisor	☐
5.9	**Weigh or measure oversized freight** For freight without a barcode or a new item, record weight and dimensions on the calibrated scale and enter them into the WMS item master.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.10	**Post the receipt in the WMS** Enter or confirm the receipt in the WMS against the purchase order number, generate license plate or pallet labels, and print them for each unit load. **Checkpoint:** Every pallet or carton leaving the staging area has a scannable license plate label.	Receiving Clerk	☐
5.11	**Sign and file the bill of lading** Note any exceptions on the bill of lading, sign it, give the driver their copy, and file the warehouse copy with the discrepancy report if one was raised.	Receiving Supervisor	☐
5.12	**Release freight to putaway** Mark the receipt as complete in the WMS so putaway tasks are generated, and move labeled pallets to the putaway staging lane in order of priority.	Receiving Supervisor	☐

6. Quality checks

- Receiving supervisor reviews open discrepancy reports every day before they age past 48 hours.
- A sample of closed receipts is audited weekly for count accuracy against the purchase order.
- Every pallet released to putaway carries a scannable license plate label.
- Trailer inspection photos are attached to any receipt with a damage or seal exception.

7. Records

- Receiving log with counts and timestamps
- Discrepancy and damage reports with photographs
- Signed bills of lading
- WMS receipt confirmations

8. KPIs

- Dock-to-stock time from unloading to putaway release
- Receiving accuracy rate (counted versus ordered)
- Percentage of receipts with an open discrepancy
- Trailers unloaded within the scheduled appointment window

9. Common mistakes

- Signing the bill of lading before counting the freight.
- Mixing freight from two different purchase orders in the same staging lane.
- Sending a forklift into a trailer before the wheels are chocked.
- Posting a receipt in the WMS without resolving a known shortage.

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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