

Falling Hay Bales

What is the problem?

Bales are cylindrical or rectangular and their weight can vary from 40kg to 1500kg, depending on the type of hay, the size of the bale, compaction density and moisture content.

Hay bales can fall as a result of instability caused by stacking them too high, not providing an adequate stack base, uneven compaction, settling over time, exposure to weather, and undermining by rodents and cattle.

What are the risks?

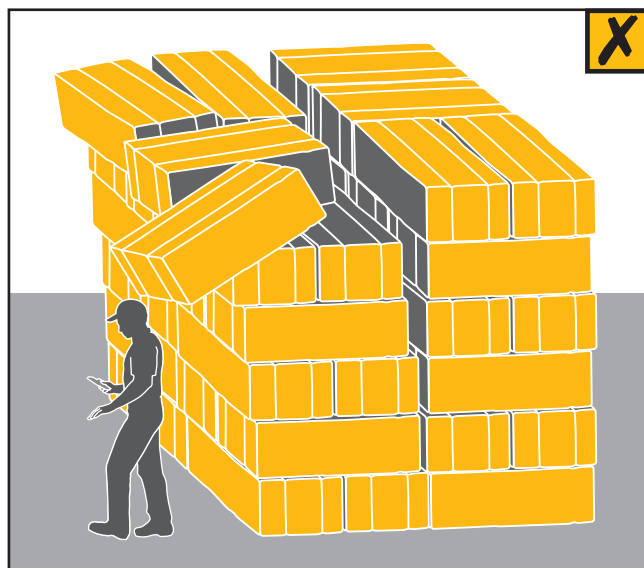
Falling hay bales or the collapse of stacks can cause crush injuries or death. Several people have died as a result of being crushed by bales, which have fallen from either fixed stacks or from trucks and trailers.

What is a solution to this problem?

Equipment

1. Use stacking and unstacking equipment that can safely lift the weight, reach the top bales and is safe for the terrain.
2. Lifting equipment, such as forklifts and attachments, should have a back-guard fitted to prevent bales falling onto the operator.
3. Equipment Safe Working Loads (SWL) are not to be exceeded.

The Problem



Systems of work

4. Stack smaller lighter bales on top of large heavy bales.
5. Ensure that stacks are a safe distance from overhead powerlines, and there is no possibility of mast attachments coming into contact with overhead powerlines.
6. Determine stack heights prior to commencing the activity, having regard to bale condition, terrain and equipment to be used.
7. Undertake regular inspection of stacks, particularly in adverse weather conditions or when transporting stacked bales.
8. Before de-stacking, check bale condition, and ensure that bales will not dislodge and fall.
9. If the stack is unstable, work from the opposite side to where the stack may fall.
10. Commence de-stacking at the top tier.

Access to the work area

11. Keep people who are not directly involved away from the work area (especially children).
12. Cordon off the area if the stack is unstable and other people are in the vicinity.

Transport precautions

13. Lash transportable stacks to ensure they remain stable during transport.
14. Check that restrained bales will not tumble before removing lashing, side gates or tarpaulins from transportable stacks. Be aware that side gates may spring open when unlatched.
15. Only remove supports such as side gates from the stable side, and work from this side when de-stacking.
16. Ensure engine exhaust does not present a risk of fire.
17. Park transport vehicle on flat even surfaces to minimise the potential of dislodgement of bales and vehicle tip over.

Further Information

WorkSafe Advisory Service

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Website www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

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WorkSafe Victoria is a trading name of the Victorian WorkCover Authority.