

Marking of pallets, stillages, or collars, with safe load, is not recommended

The marking of safe working loads (SWL) on pallets, stillages, or collars, is not recommended. The last British Standard requiring marking safe working load on pallets was withdrawn in 1989. The UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE) also follows British Standards advice in their Guidance Note PM15 - *Safety in the use of pallets*. Internationally ISO and CEN do not advise marking of safe loads in any pallet standards either.

The reason is this. Any one design of pallet has a whole range of safe loads depending upon the payload, the manner of storage, the dynamic handling expected and the length of time that pallet is in service. There is no requirement from any official source to mark safe working load (SWL) onto pallets. Pallet rental pool operators do not mark SWL either.

Safe working loads depend entirely on the goods carried (payload in standards terminology), for example one customer might use a pallet tested as safe with a payload of say 700 kg and another customer may use the same pallet and same goods quite safely for a 1200 kg payload. In this case the reason might be because *beam racking is never used* by the second customer.

A pallet forming part of a shrink wrapped unit load where the *wrapping* is marked with its safe load is perfectly acceptable, but only on the wrapping, not the pallet. In this case it is possible because the pallet has been packed with a specific payload and the packer takes responsibility for the unit load being safe. However, if the unit load is *not safe for placing in racking*, then that too should be clearly marked on the wrapping. An example might be a palletised pack of bricks, only safe to block stack.

Where a pallet manufacturer supplies in paperwork the SWL for a pallet to a customer it is not the same as *marking* maximum safe load on the pallet. If the customer has supplied details of payload and storage, for example, interlocked sacks, weight per sack, number on a pallet and the use/or not in beam racking, then a safe load can be worked out and supplied. The wise manufacturer will only mark the SWL in *paperwork for a given payload* as otherwise the customer might pass used pallets on to a third party that might routinely use a high stress use such as beam racking.

For packaging other than flat pallets there are exceptions. An example is bulk storage potato boxes, which are covered by British Standard 7611: *Potato storage boxes for mechanical handling*. These actually *require the maker* to mark the safe load on two sides of the box. This is for the simple reason that the exact goods stored plus the stack height is known. Export packing cases too are routinely marked with loading details as they are filled at the export packer's factory and sealed there. The total gross package weight is marked to assist carriers when lifted.

ISO 9000 is sometimes misleadingly quoted by holders in terms of the safety of the products they supply. Note ISO 9000 does not contain ANY recommendations for product safety or marking safe working loads other than advise use of appropriate standards as part of a company quality system.

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