



**Pacific Maritime Association**  
Accident Prevention Department  
550 California Street, P. O. Box 7861  
San Francisco, California 94120-7861

# SAFETY BULLETIN 98-21

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## LASHER SAFETY

### INFORMATION

A review of the accident statistics reveals that accidents from LASHING JOBS are always in the "top three" in every major port area in PMA territory. Data from Long Beach shows an almost equal split between the highest number of injuries by body part; (scalp, finger, shoulder, back, leg and foot.) Almost 50% of the injuries to these parts are "struck by" injuries, an additional 20% are "bodily reaction" and a final 20% are due to "falls." In Washington Area, there are a significant number of ear injuries and hearing loss claims among lashers. These persons are apparently working lashing jobs on RO-RO vessels.

**Lashing dangers should be the topic of frequent gangway safety talks. Lasher injury avoidance should focus on physical readiness, technique, awareness, care, and safety equipment.**

**Physical readiness:** Lashing is tough, heavy work. Workers must be in good physical condition to have enough strength and endurance to do the job and not get hurt. Workers who are ill or fatigued or otherwise incapacitated are at risk to injury.

**Technique:** There are techniques to lashing. Walking the bar up, and sliding it down. Working with a buddy to lift a bar into a corner casting. Supervision and more experienced co-workers should be sharing their techniques that make lashing safer with the new workers. The key word is **control**. If a bar gets out of control from a worker it can come crashing down and injure anyone in the vicinity (There are a lot of "struck by" injuries associated with lasher accident statistics.) A bar falling across a ship's hand rail can act as a fulcrum and throw a person over the side. Awkward lifting positions and the heavy weight of the bar lead to back strains.

**Awareness:** All people who work on the waterfront, and especially those in lashing jobs MUST be aware of the conditions around them. Is there someone working on the container top above?? Is another lashing team close enough to hit your team with a bar?? Is the footing clear or is the deck cluttered? Is the lashing platform properly guarded or are there fall hazards to be aware of??

**Care:** All personnel in lashing jobs must take care to reduce the potential for accidents. Back injuries especially are to be avoided by using the utmost care in handling and controlling the heavy equipment. Persons should work in teams to ensure that the bars never get out of control. Team work is also in order when there are awkward reaches or lifts required especially from narrow lashing platforms. Lifting using the legs instead of the back will reduce the potential for back injuries. Unsafe conditions should be brought to the attention of supervision.

**Safety Equipment:** Proper personal safety equipment is especially important for lashers. Hard hats reduce scalp injuries, safety toed shoes reduce foot injuries, heavy gloves reduce the finger injuries and fall protection equipment is required if working along an unguarded edge. Work inside a noisy RO-RO hold may require hearing protection.

In an effort to ensure persons are physically ready to start a lashing job without getting hurt, one member company has devised its own mockup of a lashing hook suspended 16 feet off the ground. Each shift, as workers report for work, persons signed up for lashing jobs are required to show the capability of lifting a three high lashing rod and hooking it into the lashing hook. If the person is unable to lift or control the three high lashing bar during this pre shift trial, they are given the option of calling for a replacement who can. This is a non confrontational way of ensuring a person is physically ready to accept a lashing job.

There are several **PCMSC Rules** that apply to lasher safety:

Rule 1507: Employees will not jump to adjacent containers in a stow when there is a hazard of falling between containers. Lashing bridges...shall be used....

Rule 1508: Lashings and cones shall not be dropped or thrown from aloft.

Rule 1512: No worker shall work on a deck load of cargo or containers or lash containers directly adjacent to an open hatch, except when adequate protection against falling into the hatch is provided.

Rule 1513:...Employees lashing or unlashings while the uppermost tier is being worked shall maintain a minimum athwartship distance of five (5) container widths or half the width of the tier, whichever is greater, offshore of the container being handled by the crane.

Rule 1514: Where pedestal platforms at the edge of a vessel are not equipped with railings, or where employees on deck must work outside the bulwark rail, suitable fall protection shall be provided.

Rule 1517: Materials such as cones, lashing rods, turnbuckles, etc., which are not secured or set in place shall be removed from container tops cell lids or hatch covers prior to hoisting. Turnbuckles left in place shall be laid down....

Section 10 /rules are similar.

These rules highlight the fall protection requirements and eliminate some of the potential sources of "struck by" accidents.

### **ACTION**

Employers, supervision and employees are all responsible for safety and reducing lashing injuries.

Employees must use their safety equipment and safe techniques. They should also report injuries and unsafe conditions.

Supervision is responsible for ensuring that personnel are "physically ready" to accomplish the lashing job safely. They should share the tips and techniques for lashing safety from their experience with the newer workers. They must ensure that work gangs are spread out so that they do not interfere with one another. They are also responsible for ensuring that employees use Personal Protective Equipment at all times and that safety fall protection harnesses are used while working along an unguarded edge.

**(Remember OSHA defines an unguarded edge as any area within three feet of an edge where the next lower level is 8 feet or more in the vertical direction or where the gap to the adjacent horizontal surface is more than 12 inches. This edge must be protected by a guard rail, or the person exposed must wear fall protection. This applies below deck as well as above deck.)**

Employers should track lashing injuries and unsafe lashing work areas on vessels calling at their terminals. Platforms that are too narrow, that do not have railings, or that are not at a convenient height will make it difficult for the lashers to do their jobs. Additionally, some lashing platforms that do not pose the hazard of an unguarded edge with some length containers do have an unguarded edge when shorter containers are loaded in that same slot. If injury patterns are noted, then these conditions should be brought to the attention of management.

PMA's "Safety First" LASHING GUIDE contains many of the principles in this Bulletin. It should be passed out and reviewed by workers as necessary in conjunction with Gang Way Safety Talk discussions on lashing safety.

This bulletin is intended to be the basis for a "Lashing Safety" Gangway Safety Talk.