
UNPACKING GLASS SHEETS

Safety Alert | 15/01/2018

This safety alert reminds people who handle packs of glass sheets not to rely on the packaging to support the contents when the package is being lifted or opened.

BACKGROUND

In December 2016, a glazier suffered fatal crush injuries while using an overhead crane to move packaged sheets of glass. Whilst suspended slightly above an A-frame rack by the timber packaging, the vertical steel straps were cut to remove the bottom plywood sheet in preparation for lowering the pack onto the A-frame and unpacking the glass. Failure of the packaging resulted in the glass falling and toppling, fatally injuring the glazier.

An increasing number of products are being received from overseas, where the methods and quality of packaging may vary considerably.

ACTION REQUIRED

Consult with your supplier regarding the design and construction of the packaging. Obtain information on whether the packaging has been designed and constructed to support its contents, and how the packs should be lifted and opened.

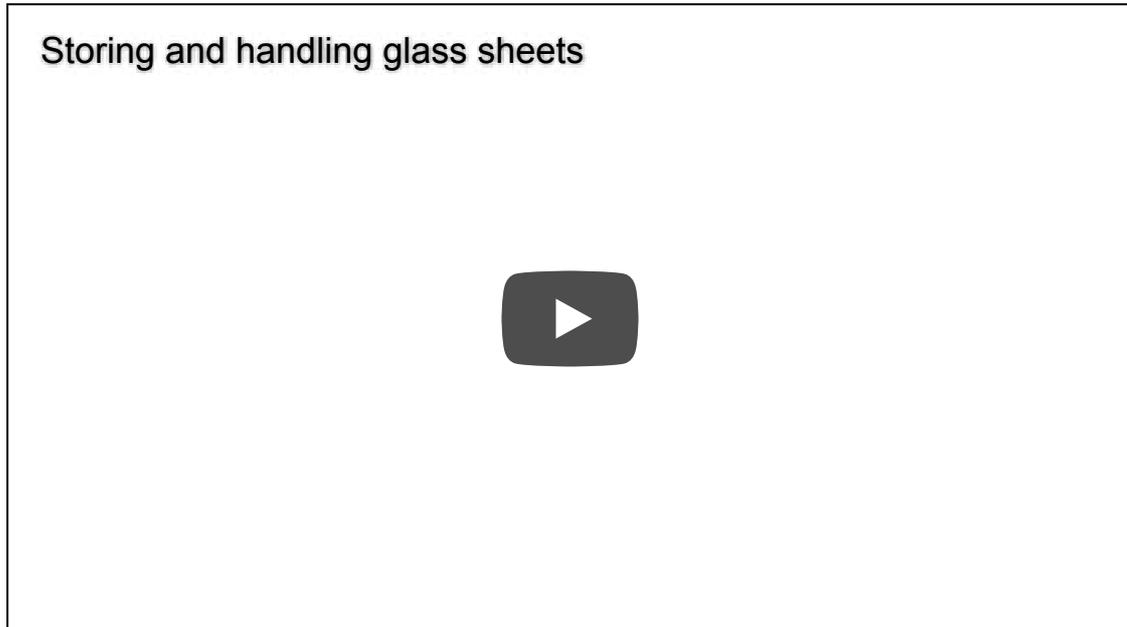
When lifting packaged sheets of glass:

- don't assume the packaging will support the contents
- only use lifting points on the packaging that are specifically designed for lifting purposes and are rated to support the weight of the glass and all packaging. Lifting points must only be used when the packaging has been specifically designed and constructed to support the contents.
- in the absence of specified lifting points, use slinging techniques that do not rely on the packaging to support the contents.
- always inspect the packaging for signs of weakness or damage prior to all lifts.
- ensure the work area is appropriate to perform the work – it should be even, well maintained and of sufficient space without obstacles, allowing workers and mechanical handling equipment space to move freely.
- keep suspended loads as close to the ground as practical.
- ensure no-one is working under a suspended load, including any potential fall zone.

When opening packaged sheets of glass:

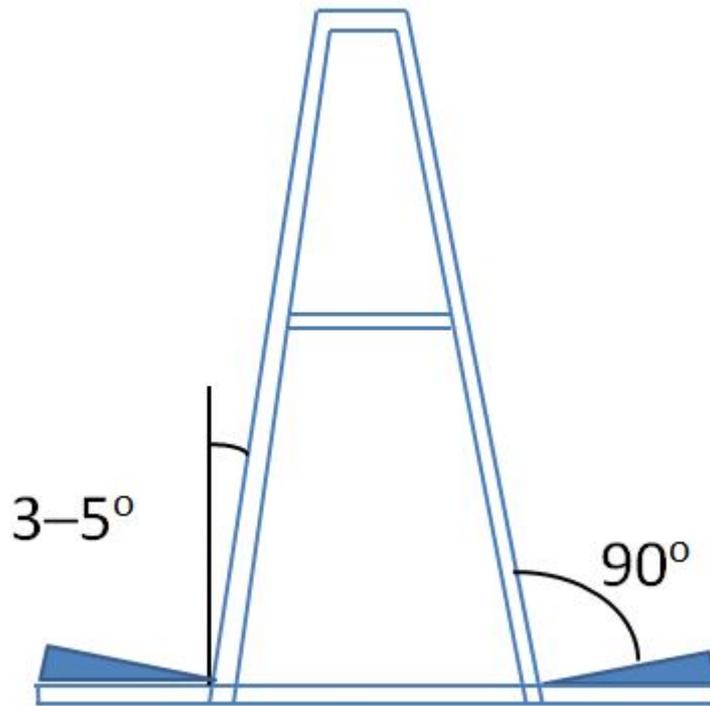
- ensure the packaging is opened by workers trained in the safe handling and unpacking of the contents.

- don't open packaging while the load is suspended i.e. the packaging should be fully supported on an A-frame or similarly designed structure before any straps are cut.
- packs of glass sheets should be restrained prior to any straps being cut.
- where it is not reasonably practicable to restrain packs, stand at the end, rather than in front, of the sheets when removing the straps or packaging.



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN STORING AND HANDLING GLASS

- Ensure glass sheets, or packages of glass sheets, are stored on their edge with a three to five degree (3° 5°) lean (four degrees (4°) is optimum), and on a suitable 90° A-frame or similarly designed structure as shown below.
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- Ensure that the rack is constructed to support the weight evenly and is load rated. Do not exceed the safe working load of the racking.
- Ensure that the racking is stable and of appropriate weight, shape and size to support packaging and glass sheets, and to allow for the safe removal of packaging.
- Ensure the racking is regularly inspected for damage.
- Ensure appropriate restraints with fasteners are used to store packs and glass sheets. Ensure the restrains and fasteners used allow singular glass sheets to be removed while simultaneously restraining other sheets.
- Ensure that there is space between the ground and the racking to allow packs or glass sheets to be removed with mechanical lifting equipment.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Our [Glass and glazing page](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/health-and-safety/industry-safety/glass-and-glazing) (<http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/health-and-safety/industry-safety/glass-and-glazing>) has more information on hazards and risks when working with glass. The information contains tips on how to stay safe, plus a video on storing and handling glass sheets.

Our [Guide for unpacking shipping containers](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/media/publications/health-and-safety/guide-for-unpacking-shipping-containers) (<http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/media/publications/health-and-safety/guide-for-unpacking-shipping-containers>) has detailed information about hazards and control measures when unpacking shipping containers.