



The loading dock is one of the busiest areas in any facility. Semi-trucks come in, trailers get dropped off, and workers move quickly to load or unload inventory. Forklifts, pallet jacks, hand trucks—and sometimes even people lifting manually—are all in motion. With all this activity, it's easy to overlook a serious risk: trailer movement, also known as trailer creep.

What is trailer creep?

Trailer creep happens when a trailer slowly shifts away from the dock. It can begin right after the driver disconnects from the trailer. Each time a forklift or pallet jack goes in or out, the weight and movement can cause the trailer to shift further away. The gap might be small at first, but it can quickly grow. The larger the gap, the greater the risk of injury.

The risks involved

When a trailer moves away from the dock:

- A forklift could fall into the gap and possibly land on the driver.
- A pallet jack could roll off the trailer, leading to injury.
- Someone walking or jumping across the gap could slip or fall.

Taking a few simple safety steps can make all the difference.

What to do before unloading begins

The trailer needs to be secured before anyone steps into it.

There are three common ways to hold a trailer in place:

Wheel chocks are wedge blocks placed in front of the trailer's rear wheels. Workers must go to the ground level to position them before unloading begins.

Wheel-based restraints attach to the dock and lock around the trailer's rear wheels. Always double-check that they're properly engaged.

Automated restraints – These systems lock onto the trailer's rear guard using a mechanical hook. Make sure the hook is fully engaged before anyone enters the trailer.

Even when a trailer is secured, it can still shift slightly, therefore it's important to stay alert.

How to monitor for trailer movement

Throughout the day, workers should:

- Keep an eye on the dock-to-trailer connection.
- Watch for any gaps forming—even small ones.
- Report gaps immediately and pause operations if needed.
- Reposition the trailer if the gap grows.