

What to Wear in a Warehouse: A Complete Workwear Guide

Work 'n More Buying Guide | Updated 2025 | worknmore.com

Warehouse environments vary — a fulfillment center running three shifts looks different from a receiving dock at a manufacturing facility. But the core workwear and PPE requirements overlap significantly, and the right gear makes a real difference whether you're the one on the floor or the one responsible for putting people there safely.

This guide is for both warehouse workers looking to gear up for a new job or upgrade what they have, and for operations managers, safety coordinators, and employers responsible for outfitting a crew. It covers what's required, what's recommended, and how to make smart decisions for your specific environment.

This guide covers general warehouse, distribution, and industrial-adjacent environments. For trade-specific requirements (electrical, construction, welding), see the relevant guides on worknmore.com.

OSHA Requirements in Warehouse Environments

Warehouse and distribution facilities fall under OSHA's general industry standards (29 CFR 1910). The specific PPE required depends on the hazards present at your facility, but the following apply to most warehouse operations.

Safety footwear

Required where workers are exposed to foot injury hazards — falling objects, rolling equipment, sharp materials, or electrical hazards. In most warehouse environments, that means ASTM F2413-rated safety toe footwear as a baseline for any worker in active floor areas. Forklift and heavy equipment zones may require additional protection such as metatarsal guards.

Hi-visibility apparel

Required in any area where powered industrial trucks (forklifts, pallet jacks, order pickers) operate. OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178 requires that pedestrians in forklift traffic areas be identifiable to equipment operators. ANSI/ISEA 107 Class 2 is the standard for most indoor warehouse environments. See the hi-vis reference table below for area-by-area guidance.

Eye and hand protection

Required where hazards exist — flying particles, chemical exposure, or sharp materials. Gloves are required where hand injury hazards are present, which in receiving, banding, and heavy freight roles is virtually constant. Match the glove type and protection rating to the specific task.

OSHA's January 2025 PPE update requires that all PPE must properly fit each employee — not just be provided. This applies to hi-vis vests, safety footwear, and gloves across your entire warehouse workforce. See our full OSHA PPE Fit Rule guide at [worknmore.com](https://www.worknmore.com)

Full Warehouse Gear Guide

Whether you're buying for yourself or outfitting a team, here's a complete breakdown of what to look for in each gear category, with the brands carried at Work 'n More.

Gear Category	What to Look For	Recommended Brands
Safety Footwear	ASTM F2413 safety toe — steel, composite, or alloy. Slip-resistant outsole rated for smooth concrete. Low-profile athletic-style work shoes are a popular choice for warehouse workers on their feet all day.	<i>KEEN Utility, Timberland PRO, Carhartt, Ariat Work, Brunt Workwear, Reebok, DC Shoes, Volcum</i>
Work Pants	Durable fabric with room to move — bending, reaching, and squatting are constant. Reinforced stress points. Avoid stiff or restrictive fits for high-rep picking and packing work.	<i>Carhartt, Ariat Work, Dickies, CAT Workwear</i>
Work Shirts & Tops	Moisture-wicking fabric for active roles. Long sleeve for arm protection near conveyor edges and shelving. Durable enough to handle regular industrial washing.	<i>Carhartt Force, Ariat Work</i>
Hi-Visibility Apparel	Required wherever forklift or powered equipment traffic is present. ANSI/ISEA 107 Class 2 vest or jacket covers the requirement in most warehouse environments. Confirm with your site safety program.	<i>Carhartt, Portwest, Radians, Majestic, PIP</i>
Gloves	Match glove type to the task. General-purpose work gloves for most roles. Cut-resistant (ANSI A2–A4) for box opening, banding, and sharp materials. Impact-rated for heavy equipment and receiving docks.	<i>Available at all Work 'n More locations</i>
Base Layers	Moisture-wicking base layer for active warehouse roles. Thermal weight for unheated facilities and loading dock work in cooler months.	<i>Carhartt Force</i>
Outerwear	Insulated or lined jacket for dock work and unheated areas. Site-friendly — no loose drawstrings near	<i>Carhartt, Portwest, Helly Hansen Workwear, Ariat Work</i>

moving equipment. Hi-vis outer layer if forklift traffic extends to the dock.

All brands listed above are available at Work 'n More locations in Everett, Lynnwood, Tukwila, and Arlington, or online at [worknmore.com](https://www.worknmore.com). Associates can help match gear to your facility's specific requirements.

Choosing the Right Footwear for Warehouse Work

Footwear is the most consequential gear decision for warehouse workers — and the one where a wrong choice shows up fast. If you're buying for yourself, your feet will tell you within the first week whether you got it right. If you're outfitting a crew, poor footwear decisions show up in fatigue complaints, foot injuries, and turnover. Workers on concrete for 8–12 hour shifts feel the difference between well-fitted, cushioned safety footwear and whatever was cheapest.

Athletic-style vs. traditional work boot

Traditional lace-up work boots are standard on construction sites, but in warehouse environments many workers prefer low-profile athletic-style safety toe work shoes. These are lighter, more cushioned, and better suited to the repetitive movement of picking, packing, and walking long distances on flat concrete. Brands like KEEN Utility and Timberland PRO make purpose-built warehouse work shoes that meet ASTM F2413 standards with a significantly lower fatigue profile than a full work boot.

For dock workers, receiving teams, and anyone handling heavy freight, a 6" boot with ankle support is still the better choice. Let the role drive the footwear decision — not a blanket facility-wide policy that puts dock workers in sneakers or forklift operators in lightweight shoes.

Footwear by role

Role / Environment	Footwear Type	Key Features
General warehouse, pick/pack, fulfillment	Athletic-style safety toe work shoe including hi-tops	<i>Lightweight, cushioned, slip-resistant on smooth concrete — reduces fatigue over long shifts</i>
Loading dock, receiving, heavy freight	6" safety toe work boot	<i>Ankle support, heavier construction, waterproof if dock is exposed to elements</i>
Forklift operator	Safety toe with metatarsal guard (if required by employer PPE program)	<i>Protects top of foot from roll-over — check if your site requires metatarsal protection</i>
Industrial / manufacturing-adjacent	Safety toe, puncture-resistant midsole	<i>ASTM F2413 P rating where nail boards, pallets, or sharp debris are present</i>
Near electrical hazards	EH (electrical hazard) rated footwear	<i>Non-conductive sole — required in any area with exposed electrical circuits or wiring</i>

Fit and fatigue

Workers who spend a full shift on their feet will notice compressed midsoles, poor arch support, and improper width sizing in ways that office workers never will. When outfitting a crew, allow workers to try on footwear and walk before committing to a size. Width sizing (M, D, W, EE) matters as much as length for workers on their feet all day — a boot that's the right length but too narrow causes significant fatigue by mid-shift.

Work 'n More carries one of the largest work boot and safety shoe selections in the Pacific Northwest, including athletic-style safety toe footwear from KEEN Utility, Timberland PRO, and Ariat Work. Shop in-store or at worknmore.com.

Hi-Visibility Requirements: A Room-by-Room Reference

Hi-vis requirements in warehouse environments aren't always straightforward — they depend on where powered equipment operates and what your facility's safety program specifies. Use this table as a starting framework and verify against your site-specific hazard assessment.

Work Area	Hi-Vis Required?	Notes
Forklift traffic areas — aisles, staging, receiving	Yes — ANSI Class 2	<i>OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178 requires pedestrian protection in powered industrial truck areas</i>
Pick/pack stations away from vehicle traffic	Depends on site policy	<i>OSHA defers to employer hazard assessment — many facilities require hi-vis throughout</i>
Loading docks with truck traffic	Yes — ANSI Class 2 minimum	<i>Moving vehicles and low visibility conditions make hi-vis essential</i>
Office or break room areas	Generally not required	<i>No traffic hazard — follow your facility's posted policy</i>
Outdoor yard / trailer spotting	Yes — Class 2 or 3 depending on traffic speed	<i>Treat outdoor areas as roadway-adjacent for hi-vis class selection</i>

When in doubt, require hi-vis throughout the facility. The cost of a vest, t-shirt or hi-vis hoodie per worker is minimal compared to the liability and human cost of a forklift-pedestrian incident. Many facility managers choose a blanket hi-vis policy specifically to eliminate the judgment call about which areas are "safe enough."

If your facility requires hi-vis and workers are wearing outer layers in cooler months, make sure the hi-vis goes over the outer layer — not under it. Carhartt, Portwest, and Helly Hansen make hi-vis jackets and hoodies that meet ANSI 107 Class 2/3 so workers don't have to layer a vest over a coat.

Distribution & Fulfillment: High-Rep Work Demands

High-volume fulfillment and distribution environments add specific demands that slower-paced warehouse roles don't. Workers in pick/pack, sortation, and conveyor-line roles make thousands of repetitive movements per shift. Gear that works fine for a receiving clerk can become a problem for a picker doing 500 units an hour.

Clothing flexibility

Pants and shirts need to allow full range of motion without restriction — bending at the waist, reaching overhead, and squatting are constant. Avoid stiff duck canvas for high-rep roles; a lighter-weight twill or stretch-blend fabric in Carhartt's Force or Ariat's Rebar line handles the movement demand better without sacrificing durability.

Glove dexterity

Gloves in pick/pack environments need to balance protection with dexterity. Heavy work gloves slow down fine motor tasks significantly. Cut-resistant gloves in ANSI A2 or A3 provide meaningful protection for box opening and banding without the bulk of a heavier glove. Keep multiple sizes on hand — a glove that's too large increases injury risk on repetitive tasks.

Footwear cushioning

High-step-count roles on concrete floors are where footwear cushioning matters most. Look for footwear with a compression-resistant midsole — EVA foam compresses quickly under high daily step counts and loses its cushioning faster than polyurethane or dual-density constructions. KEEN Utility and Timberland PRO both offer warehouse-specific footwear built for this use case. Don't forget upgrading your footbed with an aftermarket insole from manufacturers like Superfeet.

Work 'n More stocks gloves, footwear, and clothing suited to high-volume fulfillment environments. If you're outfitting a distribution team, talk to our associates about what works for your volume and shift length. Visit us in-store or at [worknmore.com](https://www.worknmore.com).

Industrial & Manufacturing-Adjacent Environments

Warehouses attached to or adjacent to manufacturing facilities carry additional hazards — heavier equipment, sharper materials, potential chemical or electrical exposure, and in some cases FR clothing requirements. If your facility has any of the following, review the relevant OSHA standard and adjust your PPE program accordingly.

Forklift and heavy equipment traffic

Beyond hi-vis requirements, forklift-heavy environments call for footwear with metatarsal protection for workers who work in proximity to heavy loads and equipment. Not all facilities require metatarsal guards — review your hazard assessment and consult your safety program. When required, Work 'n More carries metatarsal guards that work with most shoes/boots.

Sharp materials and cutting hazards

Receiving and materials handling roles involving banding, strapping, pallet deconstruction, and box opening carry cut hazards that general-purpose work gloves don't fully address. Cut-resistant gloves rated ANSI A3 or higher are appropriate for these tasks. Train workers on when to use which

glove — using a heavy cut-resistant glove on a fine assembly task creates its own hazard. You can also use safety knives that are designed to reduced cuts by protecting the blade.

Electrical hazards

In any area with exposed wiring, panels, or electrical equipment, OSHA requires footwear with EH (electrical hazard) rating. EH-rated footwear has a non-conductive sole that provides a secondary level of protection against accidental contact with live circuits. Note that steel-toe footwear is not inherently EH-rated — the boot must carry an explicit EH certification.

FR clothing requirements

If your facility has flash fire or arc flash hazards — welding, certain chemical handling, or proximity to electrical switchgear — affected workers need flame-resistant (FR) clothing rated to the appropriate standard (NFPA 2112 for flash fire, NFPA 70E for arc flash). FR requirements don't apply to most general warehouse environments but are relevant in industrial-adjacent settings.

For Workers: What to Know Before You Buy

If your employer provides PPE, they're responsible for making sure it fits and meets the applicable standards — that's the law under OSHA's 2025 fit rule. But many workers still buy their own footwear or supplement employer-issued gear. A few things worth knowing before you spend money on warehouse workwear.

Check your facility's requirements first. Some warehouses require specific safety toe ratings, hi-vis classes, or glove types as a condition of being on the floor. Buying gear that doesn't meet the spec means buying it twice.

Prioritize footwear above everything else. If you can only upgrade one thing, upgrade your boots or work shoes. The difference between a well-cushioned, properly fitted safety shoe and a cheap alternative is felt every single shift. Spend what you can here.

Width sizing matters. If your feet have always felt cramped in work boots, you may simply need a wider width. Most brands at Work 'n More come in multiple widths — ask an associate to fit you properly before you commit to a size.

Work 'n More associates are trained to fit work footwear, not just sell it. Come in and walk the floor in what you're considering before you buy. Find your nearest location at [worknmore.com](https://www.worknmore.com).

For Employers: Standardizing Gear Across Your Crew

The most common mistake employers make when outfitting warehouse teams is either being too prescriptive (requiring a specific brand and model that doesn't work for everyone) or too loose (requiring a PPE category without specifying the standard, leading to workers showing up in non-compliant gear).

Set the standard, not the item

Require ANSI Class 2 hi-vis and ASTM F2413 safety toe footwear as your baseline. Let workers choose within those parameters. This keeps your facility compliant, accommodates the range of

foot widths, body types, and personal preferences on your team, and avoids the procurement headache of stocking one specific item for 50 workers.

Account for sizing variability

On any crew of meaningful size, you'll have workers who don't fit standard sizing — wider feet, smaller or larger frames, women who need women's cut workwear and PPE. OSHA's 2025 fit rule makes accommodating this a legal requirement. Work with a supplier who stocks a full range, and build a process for employees to get properly sized when they join.

New hire gear onboarding

The most effective approach is to build PPE sizing into your new hire process — measure each employee for footwear, hi-vis sizing, and glove size on their first day, document it, and issue properly fitting gear before their first shift on the floor. This satisfies the OSHA documentation requirement and eliminates the "I didn't have the right gear" conversation after an incident.

Work 'n More business accounts are built for exactly this use case — employers who outfit crews on an ongoing basis. Account holders get volume pricing, simplified reordering, terms, and in-store fitting assistance. Set up an account at worknmore.com or at any of our four Washington locations.

Shop Warehouse Workwear at Work 'n More

Work 'n More is the Pacific Northwest's workwear superstore, with four Washington locations and full online ordering. We stock the full range of warehouse PPE and workwear — safety footwear, hi-vis, gloves, work clothing, and outerwear — in sizes and fits for every type of worker.

Whether you're a worker gearing up for a new job or an employer outfitting an entire floor, our associates know the products and the requirements. Come in and ask — or browse online and order for pickup or delivery.

Shop online or set up a business account: worknmore.com

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