

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO LOCAL 367 MEMBERS

Summer Water Can Be Dangerous in Stores and Warehouses

With rising temperatures and increased consumer demand, grocery stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, and the warehouses that supply them are moving and selling ever-increasing volumes of bottled water. When palletized, these products can pose a significant risks to workers in our industry as a recent deadly tragedy illustrates.

In mid-March, a Kroger employee working in the back room of a store in Franklin, Ind. was crushed by falling pallets of water. Five days after the accident, the employee died. The Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) investigated the accident and fined Kroger \$17,000 for unsafe working conditions. This tragic incident and others like it are preventable – especially if UFCW members and locals take action for safety today.

When you are at work or a worksite, here are some things to look for:

- Don't transport double stacked pallets beyond the distance necessary to remove them from a truck. Double-stacked pallets are inherently unstable, and when they have liquids (like bottled water) as cargo, they often exceed the safe weight limits for forklifts.
- Avoid double stacking pallets when storing them.
- Carefully monitor the stability of pallets at all times.
- Don't attempt to straighten pallets that have begun to shift. Unload the pallet instead.
- Maintain a clear safety area around pallets when they are being moved.
- All forklift operators or other powered-equipment operators must be trained and certified. This is an OSHA requirement – check for proper recordkeeping.

Palletized bottled water is especially dangerous because of the high volume moved, the heavy weight involved, and increasingly thin plastic causing cases to be unstable. In addition, the limited amount of floor space in the back of grocery stores often leads to water or other heavy unstable products, being stacked higher than safety permits.

Kroger and UFCW Indiana locals have learned from the tragic accident in Franklin and are actively working to prevent future injuries or deaths. We urge you to do the same before something similar happens in your stores.