



Building of Racking Involving the Finger-Build Technique

Storage Equipment Manufacturers Association www.sema.org.co.uk

'Finger-build' is the technique where double-sided runs of adjustable pallet racking, with sprinklers in the centre, is constructed first as a single run of racking. This single run is then handed to the sprinkler company who fit the sprinkler pipes to the rear of the rack and then hands back the rack to the Racking installer who completes the back-to-back run and then builds the first side of the next run and so on. The sprinkler contractor has the benefit of working from mobile elevating work platforms while installing pipe work on the rear of the run of racking rather than having to thread piping through the completed racking. This is arguably safer and certainly cheaper. The downside is that large amounts of racking can be built in single runs and there is the possibility of one run of racking being accidentally knocked over and falling onto the next. Finally, this method of build is more expensive as far as the cost of building the racking itself is concerned.

This type of collapse is something which has already happened on a major site in the UK. Various parties have asserted that the use of this 'finger-build' is the recommended build technique preferred by the Health and Safety Executive.

HSE have not to our knowledge issued any such guidance and indeed when we have broached the subject with them, they have refused to be drawn on the matter. They have advised us that the individual specific risk assessment should consider the matter and come to a conclusion based on the particular risks of a specific installation. In particular they have noted that reducing the risk in one area, at the expense of increasing risk in another, needs to be considered very carefully.

SEMA would not wish to be seen to insist that one method was better than any another and there may be good reasons for choosing either circumstance. Clients should also be aware that they have an overall responsibility for safety on their sites and under CDM particularly cannot transfer that responsibility to others.

SEMA would support the view expressed by the HSE that the build method should be determined after careful consideration of 'all' the risks involved, which then allows the safest construction method possible be developed for a particular set of circumstances.

EMA 21-06-11

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