# BASIC CONVEYOR SYSTEM SAFETY TO KEEP EMPLOYEES SAFE

Conveyor belts and their accompanying machinery present a number of dangers to those working with them. The types of accidents that can occur for workers are numerous. A conveyor belt is designed to keep moving and there are many parts that make up this machine any of which could fail at any time. Injuries that are common include burns and abrasions, bone fractures, amputations and lost limbs and fingers, cuts and scrapes and the list goes on.

The following is a basic list of Safety Best Practices when working on and around conveyor systems. If you would like to know more about Conveyor Safety, a good resource is the "CEMA – Conveyor Equipment Manufacturers Association". They have publications, directories and a whole host of safety guidelines for many industries and types of conveyors. We have included additional resources at the end of this article.

## CONVEYORS ARE FOR MATERIAL, NOT PEOPLE!

No one should sit, stand, climb, walk on a conveyor, EVER. This should be obvious, but it is one of the most common causes of injuries involving conveyors.

## DO NOT OVERLOAD CONVEYORS

Overloading conveyor systems can lead to overheating, malfunction, falling goods, etc. The safe operating capacity of any conveyor should be explained to workers and enforced.

## ENSURING ALL MACHINE GUARDING IS IN PLACE

Conveyor systems contain a great deal of moving parts. Gears, chains and belts are normally found on conveyors all of which can be hazardous. Conveyors should not be operated without having covers and guards in place to keep clothing and extremities out of its working parts.

## ENSURE WORKERS HAVE THE PROPER ATIRE

Even with guards in place, conveyors are capable of catching loose extremities, clothing and long hair resulting in severe injuries or even death. Long hair should

be tied back or under a cap; clothing should not be baggy, ties should be tucked in, loose jewelry should be removed, hands should only touch materials on the conveyor when necessary, NEVER the conveyor itself.

### WORKERS SHOULD BE PROPERLY TRAINED WITH FULL ACCESS TO CONTROLS

In the event there is an accident or emergency, workers need to know exactly how to stop the conveyor and where they need to go to do it. Controls should be easy to read and use, easily accessible, easily identifiable and all workers should be trained in their proper use.

### HAVE ACCURATE AND UP-TO-DATE WARNING LABELS IN PLACE

Conveyors and their accessories should have accurate up-to-date warning labels ensuring workers are aware of particular hazards and best safety practices. These labels must be where workers can easily see and read them. Two of the most hazardous components of a conveyor system are the motors and rollers. They should be well labeled with safety information.

### PRACTICE SAFE MAINTENANCE

Whenever your conveyor system needs maintenance or repair, only trained and fully qualified repair people should be allowed to do so. Proper lockout/tagout procedures should be followed. All power sources to the conveyor including electrical, hydraulic, air and gravity should be blocked, disengaged or otherwise locked out.

The above Best Practices for Conveyor System Safety should be initiated, but the most important goal is to establish a procedure and safety and maintenance guidelines that pertain to your specific system and facility. Written guidelines posted on the wall is merely a beginning to becoming safety conscious around your conveyor systems. Train and initiate today!!

*Whenever in doubt, consult with the following:

Conveyor Equipment Manufacturer's Association – www.cemanet.org
U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration – www.osha.gov
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety – www.ccohs.ca