

Health and Safety Executive OC 520/17

Field Operations Division...

To

Factory Inspectors

FCG Specialist Inspectors (Mech) ...

INDUSTRY GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF PALLETS AND RACKING SYSTEMS IN TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED WAREHOUSES...

This OC informs inspectors that a revision of the 1984 industry-produced guide to the safe use of pallets and pallet-converter sets in temperature-controlled warehouses has now been issued. The revision now covers racking systems in general...

THE GUIDANCE ...

1 Guidance entitled *The RFIC Guide to Safety in the Use of Pallets, Pallet Converters, Palletainers and Racking* has been issued to file 520. It replaces the *Notes for Guidance: Safety in the Use of Pallets and Pallet Converters* by the National Cold Storage Federation and the UK Association of Frozen Food Producers of 1984. (A pallet converter is a metal frame which fits onto a wooden pallet to enable crushable or unevenly shaped loads to be stacked.)...

2 The guidance covers standards for the manufacture and use of timber pallets, pallet containers, palletainers and racking in temperature-controlled houses (cold and chill stores). It has been published by the Cold Storage and Distribution Federation on behalf of other members of the Refrigerated Food Industry Confederation (RFIC) (the other members are the British Frozen Food Federation and the UK Association of Frozen Food Producers). The comments of the Food NIG and Scottish FCG have been included. ...

3 The guidance is not prescriptive, but leaves occupiers to assess their own risks and the precautions they need to adopt in their own circumstances. It gives guidance on good practice and sets out recommended precautions as a yardstick. The guidance may also assist users in selecting racking systems which meet the requirement of the PUWE Regulations, reg.5 (ie "... suitability for the purpose for which it is used or provided")...

POINTS FOR INSPECTORS ...

4 Inspectors should note that there may be mechanical handling problems if companies mix the smaller Europallets (measuring 1000mm x 800mm) with ordinary UK pallets (1000mm x 1200mm). Specifically, companies are advised to have systems to ensure they do not put the smaller pallets into racking systems designed for UK pallets where there could be the risk of them falling from bearers, and vice versa, when the larger UK pallets might displace others in a 2-pallet-deep racking system designed for the Europallets. Frameworks or 'pallet-converter sets' have been attached to pallets to facilitate stacking, examples are shown in the appendix.

5 The 1984 guidance (see para 1) was not completely effective at preventing incidents during the use of pallet converters. The NIG was aware of 8 incidents of fatal and serious injury from 1970 to 1988 and hence commissioned a review from their FCG. —

6 They reported that usage of such pallet-converter systems had now markedly decreased with most stores adopting permanent racking.

7 Where pallet-converter systems remained in use, collapses were now rare. This was thought to be due to a combination of: fork-lift truck drivers being more experienced; regular inspection and repair; lower stacked heights; and improved designs and physical modifications.

8 Physical modifications included replacing the 4 upper ties of a 4-piece converter set with a single rigid top that fitted onto the legs which had been modified to create spigots. Such measures increased stack stability which had hitherto been the main problem. Some firms attempted the same result by wedging the joints on unconverted 12-piece sets but this was less satisfactory in usage. Twelve-piece sets are formed by 4 uprights with 4 tie pieces at their top level and 4 tie pieces at their bottom level.

9 Only one company (Palletower) apparently still sells new complete sets and their current design has 6 pieces: using one-piece bases and tops, and 4 spigot fitting legs to achieve stack stability. The other companies now supply replacement parts to the older systems only. The FIC guidance provides further explanation of these sets and, in particular, the illustrations on page 11 are reproduced in the appendix.

10 The revised guidance now covers appropriate aspects of maintenance, driver care and design and so NIG Minute 21/1990/06 which was issued to supplement the 1984 guidance is no longer relevant. However, inspectors may wish to ensure that particular attention is paid to the points made in the Scottish FCG review (paras 5-8) when inspecting pallet-converter systems.

Cancellation of instructions

11 FIC 844/4 - cancel and destroy. . . .

12 NIG M 21/1990/06 - cancel and destroy . . .

18 January 1995

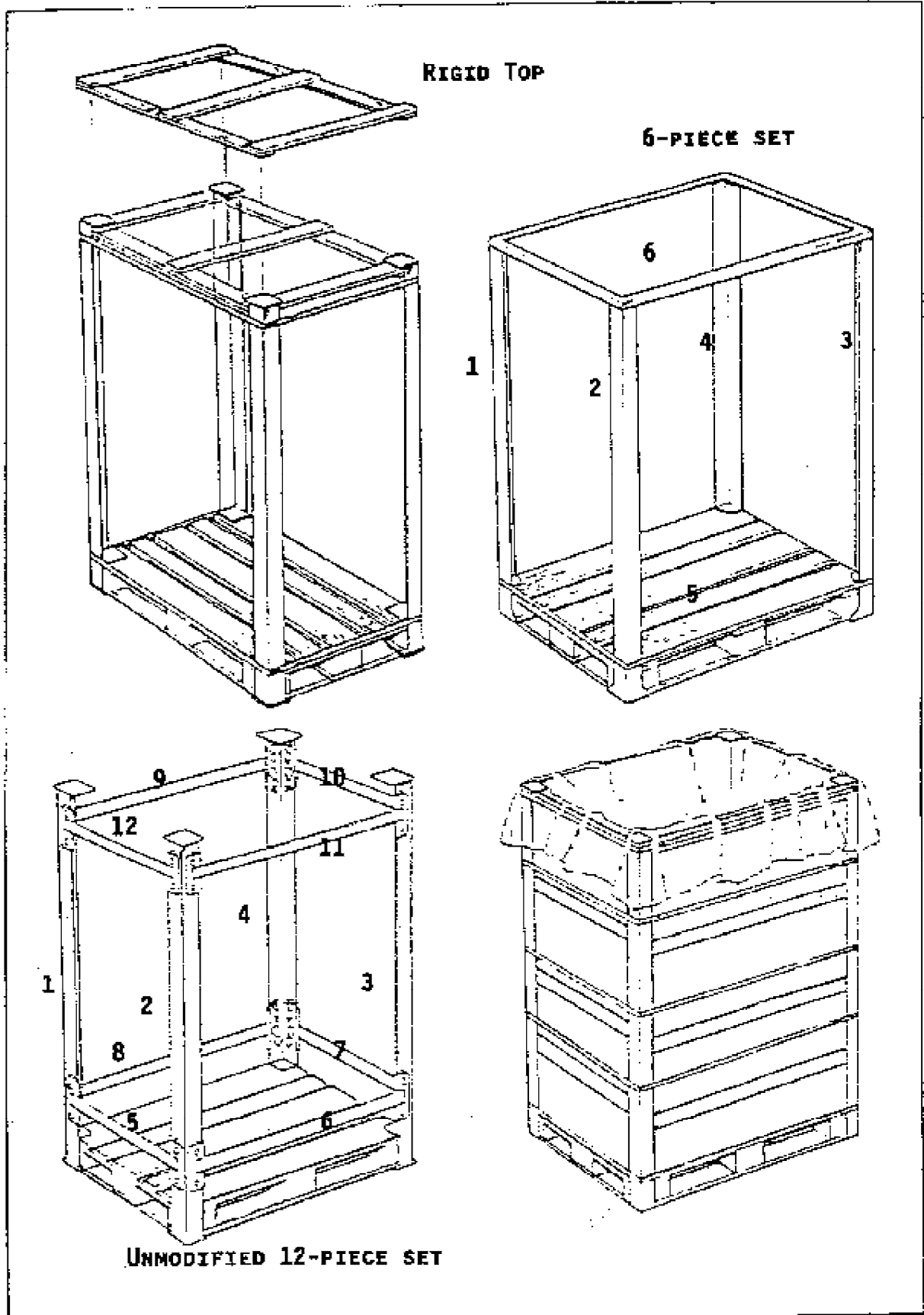
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(NEW DISC REF: J:\EDITORS\CA1\J011JL94.SAM) __

ASI headings__

Food: pallet: warehouses.



Typical examples of pallet converters/palletainer

APPENDIX (para 9) — —