

The weakest link

SEMA Distributor Group's former chairman and managing director of NSI Projects Simon King points out how small modifications, re-profiling or repairs to pallet racking can seriously increase the risk of racking collapse.



The £1,000,000 pallet racking fit out goes well. First, there is months of preparations and detailed layout planning.

A number of suppliers are contacted and based on reputation and due diligence, the contract is awarded. At this value of work, the deal is often direct with the manufacturer. The project team proudly hand over the new racking installation, a beacon of H&S compliance and designed fit for purpose.

Roll on a couple of years later.

The operators of the site have a need to do some small modifications, or repairs. The perception, it's a low value job, low risk, not one likely to interest "the big boys". So, let's bring in some "low cost" local team that someone somehow knew from somewhere. It's a "simple job", not a "big job", what could possibly go wrong?

The scary answer is quite a lot. The weakest link in a well-designed installation?

A racking installation is a carefully designed engineering structure, manufactured to minimise the amount of steel in the component parts (to keep cost down) whilst meeting stringent design codes (the UK SEMA or the European FEM). It is, fully loaded, a highly stressed piece of engineering.

Here's how the weakest link can occur, with the customer most often left blissfully unaware

- An upright gets replaced by a lesser duty upright (some are visually obvious, but many are not). The same can happen with pallet racking beams. Sometimes this confusion occurs as there are more than one type used on the site.
- A beam level gets moved upwards without design load sign-off by suppliers who will have access to the manufacturers technical data.
- A foot gets single bolted when it should be double bolted. The wrong cheap floor bolt is used.

- The wrong beam locking clips are put in (or worse, not at all).
- A replacement upright gets spliced where it shouldn't.

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We are members of the SEMA Distributor Group – we have privileged access to technical departments of the racking manufacturers. We establish a technical file on every rack repair and modification we do. SEMA audits us on this. We have a fully qualified SEMA Approved Rack Inspector (SARI). We runs safe sites with qualified and experienced, fully insured technicians.

Why do companies who should know better, and can afford better, still use substandard repair resource? Because they don't know any different?

People can get very badly hurt by the weakest link.

Log on to sema.org.uk/sdg and watch a short video on the benefits of choosing a SEMA Distributor Company or to find a list of regional members. When buying storage systems, ask to see the SDG member's current audit certificate. If you'd like to find out more about becoming a member, call the SEMA office on 0121 601 6359 or visit sema.org.uk

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About the SEMA Distributor Group

The SEMA Distributor Group was launched in September 2011 to bring together distributor members of the storage industry who want to collectively raise standards.

Every SEMA Distributor Company (SDC) has been independently audited on quality in a pioneering scheme launched by the group in 2014. It's the first scheme of its type for the UK storage industry and all SDCs must be independently audited on no fewer than 31 quality measures to retain their membership status. The second round of audits was conducted in 2017. Evidence-based assessments for the 30-strong group reveal that every single member has passed scrutiny with average scores improving by a comfortable margin to 86%. The percentage achieving Highly Commended doubled to 61%.

Every member who has passed the audit can prove that their products and services meet the SEMA QA standard by way certification.

The group comprises thirty members and is fully integrated into the Storage Equipment Manufacturers Association (SEMA). Members of the SDG are known as SEMA Distributor Companies (SDCs) and are entitled to display the SDC logo on promotional materials and vehicles.

