

TRANSPORTING TRUSS STACKS

In recent times, affordable truss handling solutions have emerged for lifting completed roof trusses from a flow-through jig to a truss stack, eliminating the risk of associated manual handling injuries.

For example, Trussquip's ingenious 'Stak Pro' truss stacking system provides automated handling of individual trusses on to a completed stack with a single operator without manual lifting. For some plants however, the issue of moving the whole truss stack from the production area remains a hazard.

Many truss plants with restricted floor space simply can't afford the luxury of a truss outfeed rollers to safely and quickly remove finished trusses from their production area. The default solution is typically to allow large forklifts into the factory for truss removal.

Have you ever stood in a truss plant and watched a forklift driver manoeuvre a pack of 16 metre span trusses with a five tonne forklift in a small factory through an eight metre wide doorway? I have. It can be quite entertaining.

The typical scenario is: -

A large forklift squeezes in front of a flow-through jig to pick up a 1.5 tonne pack of trusses and lifts them at least three metres off the floor so that they can pass precariously over the adjacent equipment, workstations, and operators.

When the forklift reaches the door the driver spends the next 10 minutes performing a dance routine

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with the forklift, trusses sagging and bouncing with each move, until the trusses are eventually clear of the doorway. Meanwhile, all other traffic finds an alternative entrance to the factory, or walks under the elevated load.

It doesn't sound very safe or efficient, and it isn't.

Truss trolleys and 'tri-trolleys' go some way to alleviating this scenario. At least the trusses can pass though



■ *Electric Towing Tugs – a solution to eliminating forklifts in your production area?*

the door in the correct orientation without the need for forklift traffic in the production area.

Unfortunately, rough or damaged floor and yard surfaces combined with small trolley wheels often require several operators to leave their workstations and push the load out the door, not to mention the risk of strains and sprains.

There must be a better way for



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truss removal from the production area for plants with limited floor space. The solution should be simple, require only one operator, and no forklift.

One option that I have yet to see implemented is the use of an electric 'towing tug'.

These devices are commonly used in industries where manually pushing and pulling heavy loads on trolleys carries a high risk of injury. (For example, visit <http://www.electrodrive.com.au>)

A battery powered tug, combined with a truss trolley with a suitable hitch arrangement, would provide a single operator solution for moving stacks of trusses and packs of timber in or out of the production area, without the use of a forklift.

Perhaps there are other equally valid materials handling solutions that could be applied to this issue.

I encourage fabricators to seek out such solutions to address this significant safety and efficiency issue.

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