Steel drums can weigh between 35 and 61 pounds when empty. By following proper procedures when unloading empty steel drums, you can avoid injury to employees and damage to the drum.

First, it is important to know the components of a steel drum.

Before unloading empty drums, unloaders should:

- **REMOVE** any obstacles or hazards.
- **MAKE SURE** there is adequate lighting and space without sloped or slippery floors.
- **ALWAYS WEAR** proper protective clothing, including hard hats, safety gloves, steel-toe shoes and eye protection. Assess the decibel level to determine if hearing protection is required.
- **BE AWARE** of locking rings or bungs, which could catch on clothing and throw the employee off balance.

*Back brace not required.*
Here is one way to unload empty steel drums stacked three high:

**Loads with CARDBOARD or FIBERBOARD SHEETS**

1. Sometimes drums arrive with cardboard or fiberboard sheets between the three layers.
2. Remove any load bars or inflatable bags and store away from the unloading area to avoid slips and falls.
3. To unload the top row, place your dominant hand under the chime located on the bottom and pull the drum forward until it tilts toward you.
4. Grab the top of the drum with your other hand. Once the cardboard separator has cleared, grab the top edge and pull the drum down using both hands and set on a chime.
5. Continue unloading the top, middle, then bottom drums in this manner, one column at a time. This will eliminate the need to stand on the bottom row of drums, since there is no stabilization with a second floor.

**AFTER UNLOADING**, roll the drum to a pallet or another person. It is important to make eye contact with the recipient before rolling the drum to them.

**THIS GUIDE PROVIDES SUGGESTIONS FOR SAFE METHODS TO UNLOAD EMPTY DRUMS** when they are received at your plant. We recommend that your own internal safety committee review and vet the procedures prior to using them. Adequate and standardized training is needed to ensure compliance with work instructions. The best practice for your work environment may vary significantly from the described procedures.

For more information on steel drums, visit www.whysteeldrums.org

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