

theFarnadyFiles

Fragile, Handle with Care Cautious Measures Can Keep Glass From Breaking

by Dez Farnady

Why does the little cardboard box with a couple of wine glasses in it, which gets shipped in a cozy van, have red labels that say "fragile" and "handle with care" all over it? The stoce truck hauling 50 thousand pounds of float glass in 181-square-foot stock sheets does not. It must be because so many different people handle the little box and only glass people have the nerve to get near the stoce packs.

If you are a glass guy who sits in an office looking at architectural drawings and figuring out storefront details and you only deal with glass on paper, maybe you should go and look at those packs. Go out to the shop or on to the factory floor and take a look at the stuff. Pay particular attention to how it is being handled because it is being handled a lot and with care.

Hands On, Hands Off

Even at the float plant where everything, or nearly everything, is automated there are still places where hands touched the glass. But, that is only where they make it. The real handling is done where they fabricate it.

The true glass handlers are the distributors, glaziers, temperers, insulators, laminators, benders and fabricators who cut, drill, polish and bevel all sorts of glass products from single- and double-glazed to mirror or heavy plate.

Every place a lite of glass goes it is exposed to potential damage that could make it an instant reject suitable only for the recycling or cullet bin. The consumer does not know how many lites find their way into the cullet bin. Just walk out behind any glass shop or warehouse and you will see not only the breakage and the cut-offs, but also the results of incorrect handling.

The only thing that prevents glass from being turned into recycling is the training of the glass handlers. These guys in the shop are protected with gloves, gauntlets, shoulder protection and hard hats, safety shoes and safety glasses. They learn to handle stock sheets with care, be it a 48 x 96 or a jumbo stock sheet from a stoce pack at 130 x 204. They may pull the sheet from a case to flop it on the cutting table or seam a custom piece before it runs through the tempering furnace or stack it on a rack ready to be boxed, insulated, fabricated or just shipped of someplace to fill a hole that is waiting.

It All Stacks Up

Glass is not as tough as some people think it is. You can destroy its value with scratches, rubs and stains long before you ever break it. The favorite trick of beginner loaders is to drag a corner of a lite they are lifting across a piece on the rack before they put it on the truck or in a case. Stacking a small lite on a big one or a big one on a small one with no buttons, particularly with the weight of an insulating glass unit, is also a rookie trick. How you stack glass on a rack can also make a difference. There are a thousand ways to damage a lite of glass and as many handling tricks to avoid the problems.

Powder- or paper-packed factory glass packing for stock material has been developed to a fine art by the guys who ship cases or stoce packs across the country. It is the custom mix of sizes of tempered or insulating glass that get boxed by a rookie packer that provide a customer with unpleasant surprises. Unfortunately for the bad handlers and fortunately for the consumer there are standards for tolerable manufacturing defects, but none for glass that has been damaged due to improper handling.

The tremendous volume of glass that finds its way to the marketplace pristine and in mint condition is the miracle of an industry that has mastered the art of glass handling.

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