FIFO (FIRST-IN-FIRST-OUT) WITH PUSHBACK

What is FIFO?

FIFO is an acronym that stands for "First In First Out". As it applies to warehouse and distribution facilities, it means ensuring that the oldest pallets are shipped before the newer ones, thus properly rotating the stock. The opposite of FIFO would be LIFO or "Last in First Out".

Why do I frequently hear that pushback is LIFO?

When you look at an individual lane of pushback, pallets are loaded and unloaded from the same face. Therefore the first pallet put into a lane will be the last one out, and thus you have LIFO. Rather than looking at how the entire pushback rack storage system is being used, many people just see the individual lane as LIFO and consider it unsuitable for FIFO applications.

So is pushback LIFO or FIFO?

A properly configured pushback system can achieve FIFO. The food industry is one of the largest users of pushback rack systems, and we all know that FIFO is crucial to their business. The key to achieving FIFO is to have multiple lanes of the same product and to empty the oldest lanes first. This means that most users have medium to high volumes of each product to be stored – 5 or 6 pallets per SKU at a minimum.

We use the chart below to properly configure a pushback system.

Number of pallets per product	Recommended lane depth for pushback
1-4	Use standard pallet rack
5-8	2 deep pushback
9-12	2-3 deep pushback
13-16	3-4 deep pushback
17-20	4-5 deep pushback
Over 20	5-6 deep pushback

In the example shown below, we have multiple lanes of "red" product. When new "red" product comes in we will put it in a new lane, even if there is a part lane of old "red" available. That way we never bury old products behind new ones. When it is time to ship we pick from the oldest lane first. This simple method ensures FIFO. Read more about this in the MHEDA Journal article The FIFO Myth.