CLAIMS

What is claimed:

1. A pallet protector having a faceplate with a generally planar front surface and a generally planar back surface, the faceplate defining at least one generally rectangular opening of comparable dimensions to a rectangular tine-accepting pallet entry opening;
   further, the protector opening having at least two sidewalls that extend rearward beyond the major plane of the back surface of the faceplate.
2. A reinforced pallet comprising the pallet protector of claim 1 secured to a compatible pallet.
3. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where the at least one opening is at least two openings.
4. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where the at least two sidewalls extend beyond the major plane of the back surface a distance at least about the width of a pallet lead board.
5. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where at least one of the extended sidewalls is at the top perimeter portion of the opening.
6. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where the at least two extended sidewalls are four sidewalls.
7. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where at least two sides of the at least one rectangular opening are beveled.
8. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where the protector is comprised of plastic.
9. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where the protector substantially consists of a unitarily formed component.

10. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where the at least two extending sidewalls are a loose fit into the tine-accepting opening.

11. The pallet protector of claim 1 or 2 where all entry openings on at least one face of the pallet are framed by the pallet protector.

12. The pallet protector of claim 4 where the at-least two walls are at least three walls and the entry opening on the at least one opening is substantially rectangular and framed by a beveled perimeter.

13. The pallet protector of claim 12 comprised of a plastic material.

14. The pallet protector of claim 13 where the plastic material is a polyethylene thermoplastic.

15. A protective shield for a pallet having an overall rectangular shape with height and width dimensions corresponding to those of a face of an industry standard pallet, the shield defining one or more openings corresponding in size and relative position to the entry openings in the pallets' face when the shield is operatively abutted to the face; further, the shield openings having protrusions along at least portions of at least two sides, the protrusions extending into the corresponding entry opening in the face along at least two edges of the entry opening.

16. The protective shield of claim 15 where the industry standard pallet's dimensions are listed in ISO 6780.

17. The protective shield of claim 15 where the at least two sides are at least three sides.

18. The protective shield of claim 15 where the protrusions extend at least about the width of the upper lead board.

19. The protective shield of claim 15 where the at least a portion of a protrusion has an angled transition region.

20. The protective shield of claim 19 comprising a polyethylene thermoplastic material.

21. The protective shield of claim 15 where at least a portion of the upper side of the pallet shield has a beveled edge effective to deflect a tine away from the pallet.

22. The protective shield of claim 15 where at least a portion of the lower side of the pallet shield has a beveled edge effective to deflect a tine away from the pallet.

23. A method of protecting a pallet comprising:
securing at least one pallet protector to a face of a pallet of corresponding dimensions, the pallet protector having a faceplate with a generally planar front surface and a generally planar back surface, the faceplate defining at least one generally rectangular opening of comparable dimensions to a rectangular tine-accepting pallet entry opening;
further, the at least one protector opening having at least two sidewalls that extend rearward beyond the major plane of the back surface of the faceplate;
still further, the pallet protector comprising a resilient material effective to protect the attached pallet.

24. The method of protecting a pallet of claim 23 further comprising securing a second pallet protector to the pallet.

CLAIMS

What is claimed:

1. A pallet protector, in combination with a wooden pallet, comprises:

a) the wooden pallet having an interior space defined under a set of upper deck boards and above at least one lower deck board;

b) the pallet protector comprising a generally planar faceplate of a resilient material with a generally planar front surface, the faceplate defining at least two generally rectangular openings; each of these faceplate openings having a rear-projecting perimetric structure consisting of a left sidewall, a right sidewall, and a top sidewall; the top sidewall's left-most and right-most portions continuous with, and unitarily formed with topmost portions of the left and right sidewalls, respectively; and further, each of the rear projecting structures having an open bottom region; each rear-projecting structure being of a size, configuration, and shape to closely nest within tine-accepting openings of the pallet; the sidewalls being of an extent wherein, when in use, at least the top sidewall extends into an interior space of the pallet at least an effective distance to provide protection for a lead upper deck board of the set of upper deck boards of the pallet; and wherein the open bottom allows for entrance of wheels and tines of a pallet jack; further, the combination, when assembled, resulting in a fit where no portion of the protector extends upwardly beyond the plane of a top surface of the pallet's upper deck boards, and no portion of the protector extends downwardly below a bottom surface of the at least one lower deck board.

2. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 1, where the protector is comprised of plastic.

3. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 2, where the plastic is chosen from: recycled HDPE, HDPE, polypropylene, polyethylene, Nylon 6, Nylon 6/6, and urethane.

4. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 1, where the protector substantially consists of a unitarily formed plastic component.

5. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 4, where the plastic component comprises polypropylene.

6. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 1, where at least one of the sidewalls is generally planar and has a beveled transitional region between the plane of the front surface of the faceplate and the sidewall.

7. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 1, where at least a portion of the faceplate has a beveled edge effective to deflect a tine away from the pallet when the pallet and the protector are attached to each other.

8. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 1, where the faceplate has a thickness between about 3/16 inch and about 1/2 inch.

9. The pallet protector and the wooden pallet of claim 1, where the top sidewalls of the protector extend rearward from a major plane of the faceplate into the interior space of the pallet, at least about the width of the lead upper deck board, when the pallet and the protector are attached to each other.