Ergonomics and Manual Handling

06.02.04

– Manual handling

Moving trolleys >

This information bulletin provides information on ways of reducing manual handling injuries when moving trolleys. It is particularly relevant for people who work in hotels, hospitals, shops, libraries, workshops, factories or other workplaces where moving trolleys is part of the job.

What is manual handling?

In regards to moving trolleys, manual handling means lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, moving, holding or restraining trolleys of all shapes and sizes. Tasks associated with moving trolleys may also be associated with other manual handling risks such as shelf stacking or stacking pallets. These tasks are covered by other bulletins in this series. General information on manual handling can be found in NT WorkSafe information bulletin 06.02.01.

Preventing manual handling injuries

Manual handling tasks likely to be a risk to workers' health and safety should be identified and assessed in detail to determine the nature and the extent of the problems. Where a person's health and safety is at risk, solutions to the problems need to be found in order to minimise the risk.

The following general problems and suggested solutions are examples of how manual handling injuries may occur when using trolleys and how these can be reduced.

Problems

Strain injuries may occur when moving trolleys, where:

- trolleys are difficult to manoeuvre;
- trolley wheels are poorly maintained;
- the trolleys and their loads are too heavy when other risk factors, such as the number of times a trolley is moved or the workplace layout, are taken into account;
- surfaces over which trolleys are pushed are uneven or mismatched;
- trolleys are moved over large distances or up steep slopes;
- trolleys are difficult to grip due to the absence of, or poor location of, handles;
- the person pushing the trolley is unable to see over the load.

Solutions

Here are some ideas that may be suitable for your workplace. The examples provided may need to be used in combination with each other. Other risk control strategies, for example training, form part of any well thought out solution.

- replace trolleys with automatic conveyors;
- mechanise the movement of trolleys, eg. use a trolley towing device;
- ensure trolley wheels size and type are suitable for the job;
- provide wheel tracking mechanisms;
- reduce the weight of the trolley;
- reduce the weight of the load placed on the trolley;
- it is safer to push rather than pull a trolley;
- provide trolley brakes;
- provide an appropriate trolley handle design;
- locate trolley handles at a height which suits the worker;
- restrict the maximum stacking heights of the trolley to improve visibility, weight and posture for users;
- ensure regular pre-planned maintenance of trolleys;
- provide low gradient ramps;
- provide automatically opening doors.

Further information

National Code of Practice for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders from Performing Manual Tasks at Work

NT WorkSafe information bulletins Series 6 – Ergonomics and Manual Handling

ASCC Manual Tasks

NT WorkSafe >

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