Ergonomics and Manual Handling

06.02.06

– Manual handling

Drum handling >

This information bulletin provides information on ways of reducing manual handling injuries when handling drums. It is particularly relevant for people who work in manufacturing or agricultural industries, local government, garages, workshops, as distributors of petroleum products or paint supplies, or in other workplaces where drums are handled as part of the job.

What is manual handling ?

In regards to handling drums, manual handling means lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, moving or holding drums of all sizes. Tasks associated with drum handling may also be associated with other manual handling risks such as shelf stacking or moving trolleys. 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 handling drums and how these can be reduced.

Problems

Strain injuries may occur when handling drums, where:

- drums are stored in restricted spaces;
- drums are difficult to grip;
- the drums are too heavy when other risk factors, such as the number of drums to be moved or the distance moved, are taken into account;
- excessive force is required to manually up-end the drums;
- excessive pushing and pulling forces are required to move the drums;
- floor surfaces are slippery and/or uneven.

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.

- introduce bulk handling to eliminate the use of drums;
- provide and use mechanical handling equipment, eg forklifts;
- palletise the drums and use mechanical lifting;
- use truck mounted hoists;
- allocate sufficient space for handling the drums;
- use a drum lifter;
- use a trolley;
- ask your supplier to provide smaller sized drums;
- provide unloading ramps;
- provide and maintain even and non slip floors;
- clean up floor spills immediately; and
- when team lifting is necessary, ensure a safe procedure is agreed and followed.

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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