



Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia
Cnr Pyrmont Bridge Road & Bank Street
Locked Bag 247, Pyrmont NSW 2009
ABN 92 223 282 877
Phone: 02 9552 1611 Fax: 02 9552 3171
Email: mfma@mfma.com.au
Web: www.mfma.com.au

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FACT SHEET

MANUAL HANDLING

Manual Handling - Your Legal Responsibilities !

Four years ago the MFMA commissioned a survey to look at OH&S in the post-harvest seafood industry. It looked at both wholesale and retail premises and asked participants about their injuries on the job and the hazards that they have deal with. The results from this survey were used to obtain further funding from WorkCover to help improve conditions and compliance to OHS legislation in the industry. The survey demonstrated the following important points:

- 53% of all injuries occurred during the months May, September, and November.
- On average, each injury required 13 days off work.
- Most injuries occurred in the filleting and shop floor.
- 42% of injuries resulted in sprains and strains, and 20% resulted in open wounds, bruising or crushing.
- 46% of injuries affected the hands, fingers, thumbs or back.
- 45% of injuries involved crates & boxes, and 17% were due to knives & slicing or sawing machines.
- The respondents themselves said that 93% of cases could have been prevented, usually by "paying more attention to the task at hand" !

As you can see, most of the problems have to do with manual handling (MH). In the NSW OHS Regulation, owners and supervisors of workplaces need to pay strict attention to controlling the risks from MH. In part 4.4, the regulation specifies that risk assessments must be carried out for activities, and that the employer must take into account:

- actions and movements (including repetitive actions and movements),
- workplace and workstation layout,
- working posture and position,
- duration and frequency of manual handling,
- location of loads and distances moved,
- weights and forces,
- characteristics of loads and equipment,
- work organisation,
- work environment,
- skills and experience,
- age,
- clothing,
- special needs (temporary or permanent),
- any other factors considered relevant by the employer, the employees or their representatives on health and safety issues.

Special note: the regulation is not prescriptive but takes a risk-management approach which

The MFMA survey also highlighted some of the most dangerous hazards that the participants nominated. These included:

Layout of Workplace

- Retail Area
 - ... Counter size
 - ... Placement of registers
 - ... Placement of scales
- Cool rooms & Freezers
 - ... Poor access
 - ... Limited space
 - ... Height of Shelving
- Filleting Areas
 - ... Depth of sink

Work Environment

- Floors
 - ... Slippery (ice & water)
 - ... Poor drainage
 - ... Uneven floors
- Lighting
- Temperature
 - ... In cool rooms
 - ... Hands in cold water

Loads - Fish crates

- Too heavy
- Repetitive lifting & moving
- Height of stacks
- Awkward to handle
- No handles on polystyrene boxes
 - ... Extra care required when handling fish so product is not damaged

Using & Handling Ice

Equipment

- forklift - twisting when driving backwards, due to too many pedestrians.

Clothing & Footwear

- Footwear uncomfortable and deteriorates quickly
 - ... Restrictive aprons due to their length and their weight
- Gloves when filleting have difficulty gripping

Work Organisation

- Long hours for staff
- Long periods of standing
 - ... Unpredictable nature of business- difficult to plan staff numbers
- work force , issues with:
 - ... training
 - ... skills
 - ... gender
 - ... stature & race
 - ... casual jobs
- Repetitive nature of job eg. oyster shucking which are specialised skills and not able to be job rotated.

The Occupational Health & Safety Management System

- Lack of reporting injuries & incidents
- Confusion about what is "OH&S"
- lack of knowledge of where to go for OHS advice
- lack of training in manual handling & OHS

There is obviously great scope for businesses to improve their OHS in terms of MH, and what MFMA has done is organise practical training sessions for our members where we will be looking at providing simple and effective solutions to your specific problems. This training sessions will be **FREE**. For more details see the attached flyer.