

MAKROSAFE Holdings (Pty) Ltd

SAFETY ALERT!

Manual Material Handling

The purpose of this safety alert is to highlight the dangers associated with manual material handling and suggest possible control measures to assist industry to manage the risk.



Background

A number of employees of a company supplying automotive parts sustained sprain/strain type injuries involving the lower back region whilst picking a variety of automotive parts from warehouse racking.

1. A 25-year-old female employee sustained an injury to her lower back as a result of picking up car batteries. The injury resulted in 28 days off work.
2. A 41-year-old male employee sustained a sprain/strain type injury of the lower back when lifting a 40kg item. The injury resulted in 35 days off work.
3. A 24-year-old female employee sustained an injury to her lower back as a result of lifting and carrying a 5-metre length of exhaust tubing. It is not known whether the injury occurred during lifting or whilst manoeuvring the exhaust through the warehouse.

Contributing factors

- ✓ The weight of the objects handled (up to 40kg).
- ✓ The dimensions of some objects making them awkward to handle.
- ✓ Poor layout of the area and space restrictions including obstructions in access ways.
- ✓ The location of items above shoulder height.
- ✓ Bending and twisting of the back when accessing objects below mid-thigh height.
- ✓ Handling objects whilst climbing down ladders.
- ✓ Inadequate lighting.
- ✓ Inadequate training of employees in manual handling hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control techniques.

Action Required

- ✓ Introduce the use of lifting devices and mechanical equipment where practicable. For example, hand trucks and stackers, vacuum assisted lifters, overhead hoists, lift trolleys, pallet lifters and turn tables.
- ✓ Provide sufficient space between racks to access all items without twisting, reaching or stooping.
- ✓ Rearrange the location of stock so that heavy or high turnover items are stored at waist height.
- ✓ Store large awkward items at ground level.

- ✓ Limit the height of shelves to shoulder height.
- ✓ Improve access by having rotating shelves.
- ✓ Limit the depth of shelves.
- ✓ Use drawers instead of low shelves to eliminate bending and reaching.
- ✓ Avoid the use of ladders when picking parts.
- ✓ Provide employees with appropriate manual handling training.