

The Science Safety Snippets

Welcome to the first edition of the Faculty of Science's Safety Snippets newsletter for 2007. This monthly newsletter is designed to inform staff and students about current OHSE issues, changes in legislation and university policies and procedures. Please direct all comments and feedback, including suggestions for articles particularly relevant to your area to the e-mail address at the bottom of the page. Welcome back after what we hope was a relaxing and safe break.

In court:

Flynn v Australian Postal Corporation 2005 (QLD)

Following the sorting of mail on her desk, a 55 year old contractor at a postal centre in Queensland, turned to sort mail in a plasticised cardboard box on the floor. She lifted the box without bending her knees and turned to put the box on the chair when she felt acute pain in her lower back. The box weighed 23 kgs. After resting for 15 minutes the contractor returned to work despite continuous pain. She sought medical assistance after a period of some months where it was found that she has suffered a protrusion of the L4-5 disc. The district court found that Australia Post had failed in its duty to comply with its own OHS policy and procedures document. It failed to provide appropriate education and training on manual handling techniques, equipment such as trolleys and sufficient boxes and space to perform tasks. The contractor was awarded \$267,719 in damages.

Manual Handling:

2006 saw manual handling as the 4th highest cause of injuries at Monash University contributing to the 35 claims for workers compensation lodged for sprain and strain type injuries.

Manual handling covers a wide range of activities including lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, throwing and carrying. It also includes repetitive tasks such as packing, typing, assembling, cleaning and sorting, using hand tools and operating machinery and equipment. Unsafe manual handling may cause a range of injuries and conditions including:

- muscle sprains and strains
- injuries to muscles, ligaments, intervertebral discs and other structures in the back
- injuries to soft tissues such as nerves, ligaments and tendons in the wrist, arms, shoulders, neck or legs
- abdominal hernias & chronic pain

To reduce the risk of manual handling injuries:

- **avoid** the need for hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable;

- **assess** the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that can't be avoided; and
- **reduce** the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable by implementing control measures.

Also;

- follow appropriate systems of work
- make proper use of equipment provided
- inform your supervisor, Safety Officer or H&S Rep if you identify hazardous manual handling activities;
- take care to ensure that your own activities do not put others at risk.

(HSE UK & Worksafe Vic)

OHSE have developed a "Movesmart" brochure which offers manual handling advice for the tasks of moving office, labs and studio's. For a copy of the brochure contact your OHSE Consultant or OHSE directly on 51016.

For more information on Manual Handling:

http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/vwa/home.nsf/pages/so_manualhandling



Training opportunities in 2007:

The new timetable for training is now available with courses being offered from February through till mid December. The training schedule and online enrolment form along with further details are available from the OHSE Webpage:

<http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/ohse/>

Odd Spot:

As Texan police officer Craig Clancy undid his trousers when nature called, his gun fell from its holster. Officer Clancy tried to catch it, but fired two bullets when his finger grabbed the trigger by mistake. Police spokesman Gabe Trevino told KSAT news: "The first bullet went through the wall of the cubicle and through the pants of a man, grazing his leg." The injured man, who was washing his hands at the time, was taken to hospital. - *Ananova*