

## Welcome to the Retail Module

Have you read the General Module, completed the test and printed your WorkSafe Smart Move General certificate?

The Retail Module should be done **AFTER** the General Module.

If it is some time since you have completed the General Module you should read the Review Module. The test for this module contains some questions based on the Review Module.

There are common hazards that exist in the retail industry. It is important to learn about these hazards and how to work safely.

### Key Point

You should follow work procedures and not put the safety and health of others in the workplace at risk.

The Retail Module contains information on:

- Manual Handling;
- Slips, Trips and Falls;
- Fatigue;
- Machinery and Equipment;
- Electricity; and
- Cash Handling and Opening and Closing Procedures.

Within the retail industry you may be involved in a range of work activities such as customer service and sales, marketing, packaging and stacking shelves, moving trolleys and operating mechanical equipment such as slicing machines.

Your employer should make sure you are properly trained and supervised and given instructions for safe work procedures.

## Manual Handling

In the retail industry manual handling tasks you may have to do include packing and unpacking stock, stacking shelves, taking cartons on and off pallets, hanging up clothing on racks, moving mobile racks, moving trolleys and cleaning floors and shelves.

Most injuries in the retail industry in Western Australia result from manual handling activities. Strain injuries occur through sudden overexertion or continuous overuse. Back injuries are one of the most serious types of strain. Too much strain on your back can lead to long-term damage.

As a young employee you are more likely to be injured through manual handling work than an older employee, as your body is still developing and is less able to cope with strain. Constant muscular aches or pains may indicate that there is too much physical stress.

### Risk factors in the retail industry are associated with:

- **frequent or prolonged handling involving:**
  - bending where the hands pass below mid-thigh level;
  - reaching above the shoulder;
  - twisting the back; and
- **occasional handling of objects that are difficult or awkward to move due to:**
  - shape, size or instability;
  - heavy weight; or
  - being placed or stored below mid-thigh level or above the shoulder.

### Ways to reduce the risk

Your employer should provide instruction and training for manual handling tasks and assess and control manual handling problems in the retail industry.

## Manual Handling

### This may include:

- **eliminating double handling** by reducing the number of times an object is handled and where possible moving the stock directly from delivery to display;
- **changing the size or weight of packaging** by breaking down large loads into smaller ones and finding out if stock is available in smaller sizes as smaller loads can be lifted and handled more easily;
- **reducing push/pull forces** by instructing employers to reduce bending, twisting and reaching movements when placing items on a shelf, rack or pallet and limiting the number of shopping trolleys to be collected at one time;
- **providing suitable equipment** such as trolleys or pallet jacks to move stock and a stable, sturdy step ladder to allow you to stack shelves at the correct height or to provide easy access to stock that is out of reach; and

- **providing a safe workplace layout** which allows you enough space to move and work safely.

**Key Point** Even though you may be young and new to the job, you should speak up if you feel your job is too heavy, too difficult, too tiring or puts you at risk of injury.

## Manual Handling

### Moving trolleys

Collecting and moving shopping trolleys at shopping centres can be hazardous. Trolleys are usually tied together using a strap attachment to return them to the store. The use of elastic or “occy” straps is hazardous and can result in serious injury or death.

Your employer should train you in safe work procedures, provide a lightweight, strong, non- elastic strap and make sure the trolleys are well maintained.

You should push the trolleys rather than pull them and move no more than 12 trolleys by yourself on a flat level surface. This number may vary according to a risk assessment for each individual trolley collector, and depending on factors such as the age and strength of the trolley collector.

The dangers of using elastic “occy” straps to tie trolleys together are outlined in the case study *Young Trolley Collector Killed* Significant Incidence Summary 15/1996 on the Internet at [www.docep.wa.gov.au](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au)

## Slips, Trips and Falls

**Key Point** Slippery and uneven floors in the workplace are a serious hazard and can result in far more serious accidents than simply tripping or falling over.

A slip or fall can cause injury to the arms, legs, back, neck or head. Neck and head injuries can cause damage to the spinal cord and nervous system. Many employees have suffered permanent disabling injuries or death as a result of a fall.

Slippery surfaces in the retail industry can be found in places such as cool rooms, freezers, deli areas, meat rooms, bakery areas, food preparation areas, storage areas and any area where moist products and liquids are likely to be spilled.

### Ways to reduce the risk

Your employer can reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls by providing a suitable non slip floor surface and good lighting and safe work procedures. In some workplaces floor surfaces can be chemically treated to increase traction and ramps provided where floor levels change.

**You should follow instructions and safe work procedures provided by your employer, which may include:**

- cleaning all spills immediately;
- placing “slippery floor” signs in public areas when spills are being cleaned or the floor is wet;
- making sure there are no trailing electrical cords on the floor;
- keeping the floors and walkways free of stock, boxes, cartons, equipment and rubbish;
- using steps and ladders correctly; and
- wearing low heeled shoes with good tread.

## Fatigue

Often in the retail industry you may have to stand up for long periods of time. This may cause discomfort and back pain in particular may be made worse. There are some things you and your employer can do to reduce fatigue.

Your employer could provide a stool or “standing chair” and vary your tasks so that you do not have to stand for long periods of time.

You should wear low heeled, comfortable, covered shoes to help reduce fatigue.

It is important to take regular rest breaks. Your employer should allocate time for rest breaks and to vary tasks throughout the day, and also enough time for you to gradually get used to a new job.

Talk to your employer or supervisor if a stool is not provided or you have difficulty in trying to handle too many demands at once.

**Key Point** Even though you may be young and new to the job you should speak up if you feel your job is too heavy, too difficult, too tiring or puts you at risk of injury.

## Machinery and Equipment

A variety of machinery and equipment is used in the retail industry including compactors, carton crushers, wrapping and packing machines, meat and bread slicers, dough mixers, chicken rotisseries, and doughnut machines.

Your employer should make sure all machinery and equipment is in safe working condition and should provide instruction and training before you use it.

Guards are often attached to mechanical equipment to protect you from the moving parts. For example guards are provided on cutting and slicing machines, industrial cake mixers, dough machines and compactors.

Your employer must make sure you leave the guards in place and that they are replaced if they have been removed for cleaning or maintenance. Machinery should be locked out and isolated during cleaning and maintenance to prevent it being turned on.

The importance of induction training and the provision of ongoing information, training, instruction and supervision by employers is highlighted in the case study *Young Worker Injured Whilst Operating Cardboard Baling Machine* Significant Incidence Summary 03/2000 on the Internet at [www.docep.wa.gov.au](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au)

## Machinery and Equipment

### Working safely with sharp equipment and tools

You may need to use sharp knives, scissors, tools and equipment in the retail industry. Examples include carton trimmers to cut open cardboard cartons, knives and food slicers for food preparation and trimmers and saws to cut materials to length in hardware stores.

Your employer should train you in the safe use and handling of sharp equipment and tools. This may include remembering to:

- use appliances and tools only for the purpose for which they are designed;
- keep cutting tools clean and sharp;
- keep all guards in place and keep your fingers and body away from any moving parts;
- cut away from your body when using knives or trimmers;
- always put sharp knives and tools away after use; and
- not leave knives or slicing blades in dish water, as others may cut themselves when they put their hands in the water.

## Electricity

The machinery and equipment you will use in the retail industry is usually operated by electricity.

Your employer must make sure all electrical machinery and equipment is kept in good working order, electrical plugs and switches are not damaged, cords are not split or frayed and are regularly checked for damage.

**Key Point** There should be a system in place for locking out and isolating electrical machinery during maintenance, cleaning and repairs to prevent it being accidentally turned on.

You should follow instructions for using electrical equipment, which may include remembering to:

- switch off appliances at the power point before you pull out the plug;
- disconnect broken appliances and not use frayed cords or broken power points;
- not use too many appliances from the same power point; and
- always keep electrical cords off the floor to reduce the risk of damage from drag or contact with sharp objects.

## Cash Handling Opening and Closing Procedures

### Cash handling

In a workplace where cash is handled you are more likely to face the threat of robbery or attack.

To reduce the risk of injury or harm, your employer should have cash handling procedures and train you in these procedures.

#### Procedures should cover:

- removal of excess cash from the till to safe storage;
- safe handling of cash in front of customers; and
- delivery and deposit of money at the bank.

**Key Point** You should be made aware of procedures for handling cash and opening and closing and you should follow them.

### Opening and closing procedures

You may work in a small retail shop where you are required to open or close the shop. Your employer should have simple written procedures for opening and closing shops. This is important if the shop is isolated or you have to open and close it when the employer or other employees are around. It is safer if more than one person opens or closes the shop.

#### Procedures should cover checking to make sure:

- there are no suspicious people or vehicles around before entering or leaving the workplace;
- no one has broken in – if there are signs of break in you should be aware what action to take;
- before leaving that the safe (if there is one) and all entries, exits and windows are securely locked; and
- there are no unauthorised persons remaining.

Now try the self-assessment questions on the Internet at [www.docep.wa.gov.au](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au)

BEFORE you start the questions, it is important to type your name on the computer screen exactly as you want it to appear on your certificate.

There are 16 questions and if you get 12 or more correct you can print online a WorkSafe Smart Move Certificate signed by the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection.