

People Matters - OH&S SPECIAL EDITION



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Welcome to the June edition of People matters – an Occupational Health and Safety Special! This issue covers the duties of employers towards their employees and visitors and outlines some practical ways to tackle Manual handling and consulting with employees.

Manual Handling

Manual handling is perhaps the most pertinent Occupational Health and Safety issues for most employers. It is not just lifting heavy boxes, but also includes activities such as filing and typing. No workplace is without manual handling risks and hazards and manual handling injuries are the number one cause of injury in Australian workplaces. Organisations who do not adequately train their staff can face fines of up to **\$943,290**, and managers can face personal fines of up to **\$188,658***.

To avoid injuries that could cause considerable personal distress to your employees, and the fines associated with them, it is vital that your organisation develop an adequate manual handling strategy.

Consulting with Employees

The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 specifies that employers must consult with employees on health and safety in the workplace. This can be a daunting task for many employers, but it need not be. There are some simple steps that can be taken to meet the requirements of the legislation, and more importantly to utilise the grass roots knowledge and understanding of your employees to create a safer and happier working environment.

A good first step is to elect a Health and Safety Representative. This individual should ideally be trained in First Aid, and also in

The first step is induction training – perform real life demonstrations, for example how to lift archive boxes or correct posture for typing – a video is not enough! This should be followed up by refresher training at regular intervals, for example every 12 months. In addition, supervisors and managers should be trained on assessing risks and hazards, and there should be a formal procedure in place for regular re-assessments. A designated Health and Safety Representative should be involved in coordinating these steps and talking with employees. (*source: Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 – An Overview, Work Safe Victoria pamphlet).

risk assessment, and is responsible for conducting regular health and safety checks and training.

Secondly, set up a health and safety committee that meets at regular intervals (say every 6 months) to discuss any ideas or issues your staff might have. At least half of this group should be constituted of employees. Make sure that individuals are charged with the responsibility of following up on recommendations made at these meetings. Thirdly – is your Occupational Health and Safety Policy up to date? If it needs reviewing (as it should at least once a year), involve the Health and Safety Committee in recommending changes and/or additions.



Do you have a question you would like answered? Let us know - your suggestions for topics are welcome.

If someone else in your business would be interested in People Matters let us know and we will forward a copy to them.