

Safety and health alert

02/97 Caring for the aged

Incident

An inspector visiting an Aged Care Hostel in Morley during December 1996 learned of four carers being seriously injured during the year while lifting residents from the floor after they had collapsed.

At least three of the carers were off work for more than ten working days, and one could not return to full-time work for more than three months.

Factors

Typically, residents prone to falls and collapsing are cared for in nursing homes where suitable equipment and trained staff are available to assist them. It appears that hostels are increasingly called upon to handle these residents.

Factors contributing to these four incidents included:-

- carers attempting lifts alone and without adequate aids or training;
- carers attempting to lift residents who weighed more than 55 kgs from the floor. Some of these residents were unable to support any of their own weight; and
- some poor resident handling techniques were employed, exposing carers to injury.

Recommendations

1. In any aged care facility where residents may be required to be lifted from the floor, a suitable patient handling hoist should be available.
2. Procedures for handling residents from the floor must be established.
3. All carers must be trained in resident handling techniques and procedures if they have any requirement to handle residents. This must include training in the use of aids, including hoists.
4. Aged care facilities should have documented resident care plans with information on resident transfer capabilities for use during induction of new carers, general training and for upgrading as emerging issues are identified.

Assistance in addressing manual handling issues is available via a [Code of Practice on Manual Handling](#), November 1996 accessible on the Internet, address below, or from the department's library. Also available from the department's library are other specific patient-handling publications.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

