

# Safety and health alert

## 08/98 New worker knocked unconscious

### Incident

A 31-year-old truck driver was knocked unconscious by a falling steel rail at the Spearwood warehouse of a wholesale meat distributor in June 1998.

The driver unloaded carcasses from his truck into a chiller room by sliding them along the steel rail on skid hooks. When he finished, he disconnected the steel rail in the delivery bay from the rail in the truck. The hinged steel connecting rail fell down, hitting him on the head. It caused a laceration and knocked him unconscious.

In August 1997 another driver received a laceration to the head from the same rail falling on him when he closed the delivery bay door.

### Factors

1. An open-ended carcass skid hook connected the chiller room rail to the truck rail. Being open-ended it was easily dislodged.
2. No modifications were made to the system as required by the investigation into the earlier accident.
3. The worker was new to the job and received no induction or formal training about the hazards of the job or systems of work.
4. Despite being new to the job the worker was not directly supervised at the time of the accident.

### Recommendations

1. Employers introduce a procedure to identify, assess and control hazards.
2. Connect the slide rails with a system that prevents the rails being dislodged. Carcass skid hooks must not be used to connect slide rails, as they can be easily dislodged.
3. Connect the slide rail to the roof of the delivery bay with a safety chain to prevent the slide rail from falling, where possible.
4. New employees must receive adequate induction and training in safe operating procedures and hazards of the job.
5. Provide supervision for employees appropriate to their skill and knowledge.
6. Ensure slide rails in trucks and delivery areas are installed at the same height, as far as practicable, to minimise manual handling of carcasses.

### Further Information

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

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