

Safety and health alert

08/08 Apprentice cabinet maker killed

Incident

An employee was killed when he and another employee were holding a stack of medium density fibreboard (MDF) panels while trying to access a panel further back in the stack. The panels were stacked leaning against a wall of the workshop, unsecured with either racking or strapping. Both employees attempted to balance a stack of nine to ten MDF panels vertically while reaching behind the stack to access another panel. The deceased, standing to one side of the panels, attempted to stop the panels from falling after the group of panels tilted past the vertical. The deceased suffered a fatal injury as he was thrust to the workshop floor underneath the panels. The force generated as a result of the weight of each panel (approximately 40kg) combined with the velocity involved when the panels moved past the vertical was not appreciated by the employees involved in the fatal event.

Factors to consider

- Each panel weighed approximately 40kg.
- The MDF panels were stacked leaning against a workshop wall without racking or strapping.
- There was not an appreciation of the force generated as a result of the weight of the panels combined with the velocity of fall that would result as the panels moved past the vertical.

Recommendations

1. Employers must ensure that the risk of being crushed, pinned or trapped by heavy material at the workplace is eliminated or significantly reduced by means of engineering controls and development of safe systems of work for the storage, movement and handling of such material.
2. Employers at the workplace must ensure that workers engaged in the storage, movement and handling of heavy materials are trained and proficient in carrying out these duties in a safe manner.
3. Employers should identify all manual handling hazards within the workplace, assess the risk of injury and develop and implement means of reducing the risk.
4. Information and guidance provided in the WorkSafe Code of Practice *Manual Handling (December 2000)* can be used as a guide.

Further information

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

Date: July 2008

A642906



Department of Consumer
and Employment Protection
Government of Western Australia

