

Safety and health alert

04/03 Child killed by unstable shop display

Incident

Various pieces of merchandise were on display in a retail showroom. One particular item weighing about 45kg was displayed on a light metal stand located in the middle of the showroom.

A small child, who was not directly supervised at the time, was able to pull the piece of displayed merchandise and its stand over on top of herself. The child received serious head injuries from which she later died.

Factors

Proprietors of retail workplaces must ensure, as far as practicable, the safety of staff and persons entering the workplace. This includes consideration of the hazards associated with displays.

Recommendations

1. Proprietors should, in consultation with staff, identify all hazards associated with displaying merchandise. Particular attention should be paid to identifying unstable displays, or merchandise which in itself could be dangerous.

The stability of each display and the risks associated with each part of the display area should be assessed. Risks should be reduced to an acceptable level by (in order of preference):

- a. eliminating the hazard;
 - b. isolating the hazard; or
 - c. by ensuring adequate supervision of persons entering the showroom.
2. Supervision of children entering the showroom may be provided by shop staff or by the accompanying adult. The level of supervision necessary will depend upon the dangers present in the showroom.

If the proprietor determines that children entering the showroom must be accompanied by an adult, signage to this effect should be posted at the entrance to the showroom.

3. Displays which lend themselves to being leaned against, climbed upon or could be snagged on clothing and overturned should be located away from direct access by shoppers.
4. All displayed items should be stable. Care must be taken to ensure the base is large enough so the display cannot be easily overturned. An even weight distribution will assist this process. The centre of gravity of the whole display should be as close to the middle of the base as practicable. If the display appears unstable, measures such as floor/wall anchors or securing the display to another more stable object should be considered.



5. An assessment of the force required to pull over a display should be made. This can be done inexpensively using a spring balance tied to the display and pulled in various directions. If a proprietor is not confident of making a valid judgement, expert advice should be obtained.

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.

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