

Handling the news

Advice for newsagents and employees on safe handling of bundles



This is a web-friendly version of leaflet IACL106 reprinted 12/05.

Do you handle newspaper and magazine bundles in your work?

This leaflet contains information for people who, for example:

- palletise bundles by hand;
- load and unload delivery vehicles;
- pick up and handle bundles in wholesale premises; and
- are newsagents, news deliverers, or other retail workers.

What's the problem with newspaper and magazine bundles?

Manual handling (lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling etc) of newspaper and similar bundles can cause strains or serious injuries which may build up over time. These may result in permanent disability, but problems may not show up until later on in your life. Such injuries can stop you from working in the future, or mean that you have to give up your leisure activities. The good news is that such injuries can be prevented. It is important to reduce the risk of injuries, even though you may feel fit and strong now.

The law

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) contain specific legal duties for employers and employees. The general duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 also apply. This leaflet does not give specific guidance on legal duties (see the 'Further reading' section for more details of guidance on the law), but concentrates on giving practical advice about reducing the risk of injury resulting from handling newspaper and magazine bundles.

How can I reduce the risks?

If you have to move bundles by hand, work safely by avoiding:

- holding or manipulating loads at a distance from your body;
- twisting, stooping or similar awkward postures;
- strenuous pushing or pulling;
- unnecessary repetitive handling;
- working without enough time to rest or recover; and
- carrying loads for long distances.

These all lead to increased risk of injury. There are many handling aids or mechanised handling devices aimed at reducing or eliminating these kinds of activities, for example boom loaders, roller conveyors, pallets, roll cages, pallet

trucks and rotating scissor tables. See the free download *Handling the news: Advice for employers on manual handling of bundles* www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/iacl105.pdf produced by the Printing Industry Advisory Committee (PIAC) for further information. Such equipment is important and where it is provided it should be used in accordance with any training given.

Handling equipment can only benefit you if it is in good working order. Report damage and defects to the manager. Don't forget damage to the building – uneven floors can contribute to handling accidents, for example by making it hard to move roll cages.

If handling aids and increased mechanisation are not possible, risks can be reduced by restricting bundle weights to agreed limits. This can help to avoid problems resulting from unexpectedly heavy bundles. Everyone in the distribution chain needs to consult and work to an acceptable upper limit for bundle weights, based on what people can safely lift, not what machines can produce! PIAC has agreed with the industry a maximum bundle weight of 18 kg, with a target maximum weight of 17 kg. In exceptional circumstances, where heavier bundles are produced, suitable labelling will alert handlers – particularly more vulnerable groups such as women and young people – to the increased risk.

Check out the following advice

Is it relevant to you, your work or workplace? Can you implement any of it? Can you think of anything else that might reduce the risk to yourself, or others?

- People who have to lift, carry, load or stack bundles often think it is easier to lift 'two-handed' – ie carry two bundles at a time, one in each hand. They may think it is a good idea because it helps to balance the load, or to make their job quicker.
Warning: In some circumstances, this practice may put particularly serious pressures on the spine and carry the risk of a disabling injury. Employers should give training about safe lifting, including situations when two-handed lifting is not acceptable. Bundle weight is an important factor – some bundles may be too heavy for two-handed lifting by some people. Where this is the case, the risk of doing this and the need to avoid it should have been made clear to you in your training.
- Loading or unloading in the back of small delivery vans can pose particular problems because the restricted space can result in awkward postures when lifting. Using a low-friction surface in the back of the van may make bundles easier to move, particularly if a rake or pusher device is used to reduce stretching in the van. On the other hand, low-friction surfaces may not be helpful if you need to climb into the vehicle as they may increase the risk of slips, especially in wet weather. Avoid unnecessary manual handling by setting up the delivery round in the correct sequence when loading.
- Large, fully laden roll cages or trolleys can be difficult to control if the person pushing them does not have a clear view of the way ahead. The result can be collisions and accidents causing strain injuries. Check that you load large cages and trolleys to sensible limits. A loading level mark on the cage can help to prevent overfilling.
- Carelessly discarded strapping loops often cause trips and falls resulting in injury and time off work. Check that loops are always cleared up from the floor. Conveniently placed waste bins can help improve housekeeping.
- A lot of bundle distribution work takes place at night. Trips and falls are more likely where lighting is inadequate. See that the job is arranged so that unlit or badly lit areas are not used as work areas or pedestrian routes.
- Avoid unnecessary carrying and reaching by positioning trolleys or roll cages as

close as possible to work tables and delivery vehicles.

- Set out the work in the loading areas so that there is ready access to the vehicles and cages, with room to manoeuvre the cages manually. Ensure that there is also enough space, free of obstructions, in other work locations. Cramped workplaces can increase the risk of injuries.
- Be cautious when using lumbar support belts as it has not been proved how effective they are. There are many types of belt, each claiming to work differently and incorporating different design features. However, there is no evidence about which type of belt is most appropriate for which activities. Where manual handling of bundles is likely to cause injury, better protection will be gained by using aids or equipment to avoid the handling in the first place, or by improving the working environment and reducing the bundle weights to an acceptable limit.
- Some medical conditions or injuries can increase the risk of health problems arising from manual handling. If you are ill or injured it is sensible to ask your doctor if your condition is likely to be made worse by your work. If this is the case tell your employer. **You should also let your employer know if you are pregnant, so they can be sure the work will not harm you.**

Advice for newsagents

Newsagents can reduce the risk of injury to themselves, to those who deal with returns bundles, and to their delivery staff by following this advice:

- Try to use a front-opening rather than a top-opening secure delivery box as these eliminate the need to reach over the rim and down to the base.
- If you have a top-opening secure delivery box which will not be filled to capacity, put a stout box or something similar in the base. This will raise the load and avoid the need for you to stoop when lifting out the order bundle. Ensure that the height of the false base takes account of the size of the next day's order. It will also help the delivery agent who collects your returns bundle.
- Use a porter's trolley to move the bundles into and out of the shop – this is far safer than carrying the bundles, particularly if you are tempted to carry two at a time, one in each hand.
- Before moving the bundle, it may be safer to split it into more manageable quantities.
- Make sure your returns bundles are not heavier than those made up by the publisher and wholesaler.
- Make up securely tied bundles with strong twine rather than using flimsy, cardboard boxes.
- Limit the bundles to a height no greater than those that you receive so that they won't be too heavy.
- Check with the local trading standards office about by-laws on any weight limits that may apply to juveniles. Use this information in your manual handling risk assessments and take appropriate action to ensure that the newspaper deliverers are not required to lift, carry or move anything so heavy which is likely to cause them injury. Where necessary, avoid overloading by:
 - using trolleys; or
 - splitting rounds, and perhaps transporting parts to pre-arranged points for collection by the news deliverers.
- Provide suitable training and regular information to all your staff, including the newspaper deliverers, on safe lifting and the nature of the injuries that you are trying to protect them against.

Note: This leaflet covers only manual handling. Members of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents can obtain guidance on other aspects of the safety of news deliverers from NFRN, Yeoman House, Sekforde Street, London EC1R 0HF,

Tel: 020 7253 4225 Fax: 020 7250 0927 NRFRN Helpline for members Tel: 0845 601 5818 Website: www.nfrnonline.com

Further reading

Getting to grips with manual handling: A short guide Leaflet INDG143(rev2) HSE Books 2004 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 978 0 7176 2828 5)

Handling the news: Advice for employers on manual handling of bundles IACL105 Web only www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/iacl105.pdf

Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 978 0 7176 2488 1

Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended). Guidance on Regulations L23 HSE Books 2004 ISBN 978 0 7176 2823 0

What the papers weigh: Safe handling of bundles Video HSE Books 1999 ISBN 978 0 7176 1948 1

Upper limb disorders in the workplace HSG60 (Second edition) HSE Books 2002 ISBN 978 0 7176 1978 8

Further information

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This guidance is prepared, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), by the Printing Industry Advisory Committee (PIAC) which was appointed by the Health and Safety Commission as part of its formal advisory structures. The guidance represents what is considered to be good practice by members of the Committee. It has been agreed by the Commission. Following this advice is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you follow this guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

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