



Priorities for health and safety in the poultry processing industry

Food Sheet No 11

Introduction

This sheet has important information for employers and employees in the poultry processing industry. Your attention will be drawn to the particular aspects of the working environment which deserve special attention. The information in this sheet is based on an analysis of the accidents which have been reported to HSE and local authorities by employers. The information is also based on HSE investigations. You should assess all the aspects discussed in this sheet carefully to make sure that adequate precautions are in place, and that they are in place permanently. Usually, once a risk is identified, it will be clear what the appropriate precaution is. If you need further guidance on a particular topic, please refer to the Useful information section.

The priorities

Table 1 lists the main causes of accidents to employees in 1989-92, in order of priority. It also outlines which aspects of the working environment are involved. The table shows that it is important to focus on the following, as they cause 70% of all injuries:

- (a) slips and trips alone account for 25% of all injuries and nearly 40% of major injuries;
- (b) manual handling;
- (c) safety in the use of hand tools (knives);
- (d) machinery accounts for 16% of major injuries - especially conveyors and packaging machinery.

Occupational ill health

Because accident reports do not include occupational ill health, the tables only cover safety. But experience of the industry suggests the occupational health priorities are likely to be:

- (a) upper limb disorders;
- (b) chronic ill health from manual handling.

The risks compared with other industries

In 1991-92 the overall incidence rates, that is the number of injuries per 100 000 employees, were 236 for major injuries and 3070 for injuries causing over a three day absence (O3D), totalling 3306 overall.

This makes the industry the eighth most risky out of the 19 sectors of the food industry as a whole, and it has an overall incidence rate two-and-half times the average for the manufacturing industry generally, which has an incidence rate of 1269 overall.

Scope of this guidance

This guidance uses reports from employers whose main activity is coded to Standard Industrial Classification (1980) 4123. This covers slaughtering of poultry and game birds and the processing of poultry meat products such as prepared meals based on poultry.

The figures used are for 1991-92, the last year for which detailed incidence rates are available. The figures are still relevant to more recent years, which have not shown much change.

The analysis was confined to injuries reported to employees on and off site. Visitors, contractors and the self-employed were excluded, but it is likely that these injuries number only a few.

Safety checklist

This checklist includes the most common situations that cause accidents, as well as a list of preventative measures.

Handling

- (a) avoid heavy or awkward lifting or pulling and pushing movements, and sharp objects;
- (b) avoid lifting movements which involve reaching too high or too low.

Slips

- (a) avoid spillage and leakages to floor;
- (b) clear up spillages and dry floor immediately;
- (c) clean effectively, preferably out of hours;
- (d) dry wet floors after cleaning.

Trips

- (a) avoid obstructions in walkways and at workstations;
- (b) avoid uneven floors;

Table 1

<i>Kind</i>	<i>Relative importance</i>	<i>Significant factors</i>
Handling	29% of all reported injuries. 9% of major injuries.	43% were due to the sharpness of the load and 33% due to the weight.
Slips and trips	24% of all reported injuries. 39% of major injuries.	51% of total number and 38% of major injuries are slips. 18% of the total are trips.
Struck by moving object	17% of all reported injuries. 7% of major injuries.	37% involved hand tools (knives).
Struck against objects	8% of all reported injuries.	70% are against fixed objects.
Machinery	7% of all reported injuries. 16% of major injuries.	13% involved conveyors. Investigated accidents showed that the following were the most common: (a) packaging machinery 30% (b) skinning machines 10% (c) EV machinery 10% (d) portioning saw 7% (e) gizzard peelers 7% (f) pie and tart machines 7%
Falls	5% of all reported injuries. 14% of major injuries.	30% occurred on stairs. 17% from vehicles. 17% from ladders.
Exposure to harmful substances	3% of all reported injuries.	43% involve splashes. Ammonia from refrigeration systems was most commonly involved in accidental release of chemicals.
Transport	3% of all reported injuries. The only reported fatal accident in the last five years.	56% involved fork lift trucks.

Struck by objects

- (a) train employees in the safe use of knives;
- (b) wear suitable protective equipment, eg chainmail gloves.

Machinery

- (a) make sure that conveyors, packaging machinery, EV machinery, skinning machinery, portioning saws, gizzard peelers and pie and tart machines are properly safeguarded.

Falls

- (a) check condition of stairs and handrails;
- (b) safe use of ladders;
- (c) make sure there is safe access onto vehicles.

Exposure to harmful substances

- (a) assess how risks arise and can be controlled;
- (b) set up safe systems for handling cleaning substances, and make sure personal protective equipment is used correctly.

Transport

- (a) operate fork lift trucks safely;
- (b) select and train drivers.

Useful information

- 1 *Essentials of health and safety at work* 1994 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0716 X
- 2 *An index to health and safety guidance for the food industry* FIS 7 1996 HSE Books
- 3 *A recipe for safety: Health and safety in the food industry* TOP 05 1994 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0911 1 (available in priced packs of five)
- 4 *Health and safety in retail and wholesale warehouses* HS(G)76 1992 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 885731 2
- 5 *Workroom temperatures in places where food is handled* FIS 3 1994 HSE Books
- 6 *Safe management of ammonia refrigeration systems, food and other workplaces* PM81 1995 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 1066 7
- 7 *Workplace transport safety, guidance for employers* HS(G) 136 1995 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0935 9
- 8 *Slips and trips: guidance for the food industry* HS(G)156 1996 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0832 8
- 9 *Manual handling: solutions you can handle* HS(G)115 1994 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0693 7
- 10 *Manual Handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992* Guidance on Regulations L23 1992 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0411 X
- 11 *Work related upper limb disorders - Guidance for the poultry industry* In preparation by British Poultry Meat Federation, 7th Floor, Imperial House, 15-19 Kingsway, London WC2B 6UA
- 12 *Work related upper limb disorders - a guide to prevention* HS(G)60 1990 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 885565 4
- 13 *Safety in meat preparation - guidance for butchers* HS(G)45 1995 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0781 X
- 14 *Pie and Tart Machines* HS(G)31 1986 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 883891 1
- 15 *Safe use of ladders, step ladders and trestles* GS31 1984 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 883594 7
- 16 *Safety in working with lift trucks* HS(G)6 1992 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 886395 9
- 17 *A step by step guide to COSHH assessment* HS(G) 97 1993 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 886379 7

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For other enquiries ring HSE's InfoLine Tel: 0541 545500, or write to HSE's Information Centre, Broad Lane, Sheffield S3 7HQ.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the 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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