



## Priorities for health and safety in the slaughtering industry

### Food Information Sheet No 14

#### Introduction

This sheet has important information for people involved in the slaughtering industry. Your attention will be drawn to the particular situations and equipment which experience shows are most likely to be the cause of accidents. 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. All the situations and equipment pointed out in this sheet should be assessed 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. However, 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 tells you about the types of situation and equipment involved. From the information in the table, it seems that it is important to focus on the following, as the risks involved cause 70% of all injuries:

- to prevent deaths, make sure vehicles are moved in a safe way;
- set up safe systems to prevent injuries from hand knives;
- make sure safety precautions are in place for the manual handling of heavy loads;
- to prevent slips, avoid wet and greasy floors;
- make sure machinery is safeguarded, especially bandsaws, derinders, and packaging machinery.

#### Occupational ill health

This information sheet does not cover the causes of occupational ill health within the slaughtering industry. Experience of the industry as a whole suggests the main causes are likely to be:

- chronic ill health from manual handling, eg lifting boxed meat;
- upper limb disorders, eg from deboning;

- noise-induced hearing loss;
- infections from micro-organisms.

#### The risks compared with other industries

In 1991-92, in the slaughtering industry, the overall incidence rates, that is the number of injuries per 100 000 employees, were 452 for major injuries and 8375 for injuries causing over a three day absence (O3D), totalling 8827 overall.

This makes the slaughtering industry the second worst in the food industry as a whole. It is also the third worst of all manufacturing sectors, with an accident rate seven times the average for the manufacturing industry generally (at 1269 overall). It is also the second worst in the food industry for fatal injuries - reporting seven deaths in the seven years from 1988-89 to 1994-95.

These figures are for 1991-92, the last year for which such detailed incidence rates are available. The trend since then is one of improvement.

If this shocking record is to improve, everyone in the industry must make every effort to set up safety systems in certain priority areas. You will find these listed in the Safety checklist below.

#### Scope of this information sheet

This information sheet uses reports from employers whose main activity is coded to Standard Industrial Classification (1980) 4121. This covers slaughterhouses, hide and skin production, meat chilling and freezing for human consumption and edible offal preparation.

The analysis was confined to injuries reported to on and off site employees. Visitors, contractors and the self-employed were not included.

#### Safety checklist

This checklist includes the most common situations which cause accidents, together with preventative measures.

#### Struck by objects

- make sure safety precautions are followed when staff use knives;
- make sure staff wear protective equipment, if this is necessary.

**Table 1**

<i>Kind of accident</i>	<i>Relative importance</i>	<i>Significant factors</i>
Struck by moving object including hand tools	39% of all reported injuries; this is more than twice the average for the food industry generally. 16% of major injuries.	62% of them involve hand tools of which knives are the great majority. Investigation revealed the majority occurred during boning out.
Handling	20% of all reported injuries. Only 10% of major injuries.	30% are associated with the sharpness of the object being carried. 34% are due to the weight of the object.
Slips and trips	15% of all reported injuries. 28% of major injuries.	46% are slips. Investigation showed most involved wet and greasy floors.
Machinery	7% of all reported injuries. 18% of major injuries.	Investigation showed bandsaws, derinders and packaging machinery to be the most commonly involved machines.
Falls from a height	4% of all reported injuries. Much lower than the food average. 14% of major injuries.	33% involve stairs. 50% of high falls and 30% of major injuries are from ladders. Investigation showed falls through fragile surfaces are also important.
Struck against objects	4% of all reported injuries.	67% involved fixed objects.
Animal	2% of all reported injuries.	80% involved cattle.
Transport	1% of all reported injuries. But a significant cause of deaths.	25% involved fork lift trucks.

**Handling**

- avoid heavy lifting and pulling movements;
- eliminate as many handling operations as you can;
- if it is impossible to mechanise handling operations completely, then assess the risk factors and take appropriate safety precautions.

**Slips**

- take measures to avoid spillage and leakage;
- take measures to contain unavoidable spillages so they do not contaminate the floor;
- make sure there is effective floor drainage, to limit wet areas;
- make sure wet floors are dried immediately after cleaning;
- make sure cleaning is carried out thoroughly to remove grease;
- make sure the surfaces of your floors are rough enough.

**Trips**

- avoid uneven floors.

**Machinery**

- thoroughly check safety guarding, especially at bandsaws, derinders and packaging machinery;
- make sure machinery can be set, maintained and fed, and that blockages are cleared and cleaned with safety guarding in place or with the machine isolated and stationary.

**Falls**

- identify all areas where access is likely to be needed and then arrange safe access;
- check the condition of stairs and keep them free of slip risks;
- make sure stairs have adequate handrails;
- set up a safe system of work for using ladders;
- avoid the need for access onto vehicles, and where this is impossible make sure the access is safe.

## **Transport**

- select fork lift truck operators carefully;
- make sure fork lift truck drivers are properly trained;
- make sure vehicles are moved safely.

## **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* FIS7 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* FIS3 1994 HSE Books

6 *Safe management of ammonia refrigeration systems, food and other workplaces* PM81 1995 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 1066 7

7 *Manual handling: solutions you can handle* HS(G)115 1994 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0693 7

8 *Slips and trips: guidance for the food processing industry* HS(G)156 1996 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0832 8

9 *Safety in meat preparation: Guidance for butchers* HS(G)45 1988 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 885461 5

10 *Safety guidance notes - meat industry* 1991 British Meat Manufacturers Association, 19 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QP Tel: 0171 935 7980. These cover knife injuries and other priority areas, including:

No 3 - *Knife accidents - First aid*

No 4 - *Preventing slips, trips and falls on the level*

No 6 - *Work related upper limb disorders*

No 7 - *Noise at Work Regulations 1989*

No 10 - *Safe use of knives*

No 11 - *Bandsaws*

No 11A - *Limitations upon the use of bandsaws for cutting fresh meat*

No 27 - *Derinding, skinning, membrane machine*

No 29 - *Thermo forming horizontal form fill and seal machines*

No 51A - *COSHH, zoonoses*

No 55 - *Personal protective equipment at work in the meat industry*

11 *Safe use of ladders, step ladders and trestles* GS31 1984 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 1023 3

12 *Work on fragile roofs* CIS22 1996 HSE Books

13 *Safety in working with lift trucks* HS(G)6 1992 HSE Books ISBN 0 11 886395 9

14 *Rider operated lift trucks - operator training* Approved Code of Practice COP26 1988 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0474 8

15 *Workplace transport safety, guidance for employers* HS(G)136 1995 HSE Books  
ISBN 0 7176 0935 9

16 *The occupational zoonoses* 1993 HSE Books  
ISBN 0 11 886397 5

17 *Noise at work* Noise Guide No 1: *Legal duties of employers to prevent damage to hearing* Noise Guide No 2: *Legal duties of designers, manufacturers, importers and suppliers to prevent damage to hearing. The Noise at Work Regulations 1989* 1996 HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 0454 3

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