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To
 AFQ Inspectors (Band 0-4)
 RSG/SSG Specialist Inspectors (Ergonomics) (Bands 0-3)
 RSG/SSG Medical and Occ Health Inspectors

MANUAL HANDLING IN BEER DELIVERY

This OC informs inspectors of a guidance booklet recently published by the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association (BLRA) entitled *Manual handling in the brewing and licensed retail industry* (file 525).

BACKGROUND

1 Injury statistics for the brewing industry show that 34% (1997/98) of all reported injuries (and 14% of major injuries) are due to manual handling. These injuries are caused mainly by handling heavy loads such as casks, kegs and crates, particularly during delivery to pubs and similar retail outlets. The delivery of beer from lorry to pub, often across a public footpath, falls within HSE's enforcement responsibility.

2 In the food/drink industries, manual handling in beer delivery has been identified by the Food Section as a priority area because of the high injury rate. In the early 1990's some 45% of injuries in the brewing industry were caused by manual handling. The reduction to 34% by 1997/98 reflects both efforts made by the brewing industry to tackle the problem and also the fact that much beer delivery is now contracted out to delivery organisations for which comparable injury data specific to beer delivery is not so readily available.

3 Because of the high manual handling injury rate in beer delivery, the Food Section came to an agreement with the BLRA that practical guidance was required, not only for BLRA members but also for others associated with this activity. The BLRA offered to produce this guidance in which the Food Section has had the opportunity to assist and comment on drafts.

THE GUIDANCE BOOKLET

4 The BLRA guidance booklet *Manual handling in the brewing and licensed retail industry* was published and launched at a BLRA event in February 1999. The booklet is available from The Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association, 42 Portman Square, London W1H 0BB, telephone 0171 486 4831.

5 The guidance is a helpful step by the brewing industry to address manual handling injuries in beer delivery and complements the earlier HSE guidance HSG119 *Manual handling in drinks delivery* published in 1994. It sets out the legal framework and the hierarchy for action, particularly the need to consider the mechanical handling options available. The guidance is in 3 sections:

- 1) Section 1 covering the legal duties and advice to those in control of the premises;
- 2) Section 2 dealing with mechanical handling possibilities; and
- 3) Section 3 covering safe manual handling techniques.

6 The guidance indicates mechanical handling (cellar lifts, mechanical devices to get loads on and off lorries etc) should be adopted where reasonably practicable. Whether a cellar lift is reasonably practicable will depend, for example, on the depth of cellar and frequency of deliveries/collections. The guidance indicates the advantages and drawbacks of numerous mechanical aids available for loading the vehicle and making the delivery.

7 Where manual handling cannot be avoided, the guidance gives advice on ergonomic assessment, reduction of risk, training and good systems of work. Section 3 of the guidance gives detailed practical guidance on safe methods of handling casks, kegs etc at different stages of delivery and also highlights unsafe methods. It also states maximum sizes of containers to be handled by one or 2 people in different situations.

8 The guidance will be helpful to managers faced with the challenge of further reducing manual handling injuries. HSE and local authority inspectors will also find it helpful as an indication of reasonably practicable standards. In particular inspectors will want to ensure that mechanical aids (eg cellar lifts) have been installed where this is reasonably practicable.

9 The industry will be exhorted to adopt this new guidance via the BLRA and local authority inspectors.

HANDLING HEAVY LOADS

10 Recent research has shown that handling heavy loads (eg heavy casks and kegs) carries a greater risk of injury than handling the same weight as smaller loads. This may explain why the brewing industry has always had a higher manual handling injury rate than the soft drinks industry where crates of drinks are lighter. For this reason it is particularly desirable that mechanical handling is available where heavier loads require to be lifted or handled.

ACTION

11 Inspectors will wish to be aware of this guidance when inspecting beer delivery operations. Manual handling in the food/drink industries generally, and in beer delivery in particular, has been identified by the Food Section as priority hazard requiring further attention. NIGM 5/B/1997/02 *Manual handling of casks, kegs, crates and other drinks packages* provides further information. The Food Section will be raising industry's awareness of the new guidance in 1999/2000 as a preliminary step to a possible key national objective on handling in later years.

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