

Handling newspaper and magazine bundles



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Manual handling (lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling etc) of bundles in the production, distribution and sale of newspapers, periodicals and magazines can cause strains or serious injuries which may build up over time. Everyone needs to be aware of the risks they may create for others up and down the distribution chain, and co-operate to help reduce the risk of injury. This information is aimed at employers and others who are involved in the production and distribution of bundles and includes guidance on assessing and reducing risks from manual handling. There is also specific advice for newsagents.

When do risks from bundle handling arise?

Handling occurs during:

- loading and unloading of delivery vehicles at the newspaper and magazine producers and throughout the distribution chain;
- making up orders at the wholesalers;
- receiving deliveries at the newsagent's shop;
- door-to-door delivery rounds;
- processing returns bundles made up by newsagents.

How do I reduce the risk?

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (see Further reading) require you to:

- avoid the need for hazardous manual handling so far as is reasonably practicable (see www.hse.gov.uk/risk/faq.htm), for example eliminate, automate, or mechanise the task;
- assess the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling if it cannot be avoided (look at the task, individual capability, the load and the working environment);
- reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The following advice may help you to make a manual handling assessment required under the regulations and provide appropriate control measures to reduce the risk. Look at *Manual handling at work* (see Further reading) for more general advice on how to avoid manual handling injuries.

The task

Handling bundles

When handling bundles:

- provide mechanised handling or handling aids to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury;
- limit the weight and size of bundles being handled to reduce the load and risk of injury. Those making up bundles create the risk for themselves and others throughout the distribution chain;
- provide training on mechanised handling equipment, handling aids/devices and manual handling techniques;
- arrange work tasks and schedules to help avoid overtiredness which can increase the risk of injury;
- ensure the number of workers available matches the anticipated demand for their services. For example, can you bring in contract labour at short notice when high-profile news stories break?

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 do not set specific weight limits, however, industry guidance is available on bundle weights, for example in *Delivering newspapers safely: A guide for newsagents, publishers and deliverers* (see Further reading).

Loading vehicles

When loading vehicles:

- move loads as near as possible to the vehicles;
- palletise loads (particularly at the publishers) for large deliveries;
- use boom loaders or retractable conveyors at the publishers' premises to reduce lifting and twisting during vehicle loading and palletising by hand;
- use larger vehicles with side doors or curtains to reduce working in a restricted space;
- consider using vans with high rather than low roofs;
- if small delivery vehicles cannot be avoided, use floor surfaces which are low friction and rakes/pusher devices. Avoid vans with boarded flooring;
- load vehicles in the correct delivery sequence to avoid additional handling.

Moving loads around

When moving loads:

- use conveyors;
- keep distances to a minimum where loads are moved manually;
- use wheeled trolleys/cages or tables to move bundles, and ensure those pushing have a clear view of the way ahead. Cages should be pushed not pulled;
- only load large cages and trolleys to sensible limits. A loading level mark on the cage can help prevent overfilling;
- make sure the wheels of trucks, cages etc are suitable for the terrain of the workplace.

Making up orders

When making up orders:

- use handling devices such as rise and fall turntables/scissor lifts to reduce the need to lift and twist when handling bundles;
- keep stack heights at an acceptable level;
- make sure pallets are compatible with the type of equipment used – some break apart when used on scissor lifts;
- raise the load by supporting it on a table to help eliminate bending and twisting when making up orders in newsagents.

The load

Consider the following:

- restrict the weight and size of bundles to reduce the load;
- use tote boxes to make up individual newsagents' magazine orders to help keep individual loads within a maximum weight determined by the size of the box. These boxes also have well-designed carrying handles and can be used for returns by the newsagents;
- mark load lines on strapping machines or other packing equipment to keep bundles to agreed size limits;
- restrict bundle heights and weights on returns and tie securely or use tote boxes.

The working environment

Consider how to improve the working environment:

- ensure floors (including inside vehicles) and yard surfaces are clear of obstacles and debris and have even surfaces;
- prevent strapping loops from causing slips and trips by putting them into suitable bins immediately after they are removed from bundles;
- ensure lighting is adequate so that bundles and any slip and trip hazards may be clearly seen;
- position trolleys and roll cages as close as possible to packing tables, strapping machines and delivery vehicles to eliminate excessive reaching and twisting, and the need to carry bundles over unnecessary distances;
- arrange loading areas so there is ready access to vehicles and cages, and room for manoeuvring cages manually;
- ensure there is enough space for people to do the work, free of obstructions;
- ensure workstations, for example where newspaper orders are made up, are at a height suitable for the worker's body size and the bundle sizes handled to avoid excessive stooping.

The individual's capability

Consider the capability of individual workers and:

- ensure your risk assessment considers additional risks to your employees and others, for example risks to young people may be greater as their muscle strength may not be fully developed and they may be less skilled in handling techniques;
- encourage employees to report relevant health conditions, such as lower back pain and hernias, both at recruitment and during their employment;
- consider the need to make adjustments to allow employees with health conditions to carry out manual handling operations safely. Don't make assumptions, but do seek medical advice if you are unsure;
- advise women to notify their pregnancy in writing to their employer, who should then ensure that any risks such as manual handling do not pose a risk to their health or that of their unborn child.

Other factors

Maintain equipment

To keep equipment and machinery operating safely:

- ensure regular maintenance is carried out, and defect reporting systems and repair procedures are in place for mechanical equipment such as roll cages;
- lubricate wheel bearings on equipment that has to be pushed/pulled and remove any packaging material that has become entangled;
- make sure any powered handling equipment for moving bundles is properly guarded and is working correctly.

Use personal protective equipment (PPE)

When handling bundles:

- provide appropriate gloves and, where necessary, suitable outdoor clothing, as very low temperatures can result in an increased risk of injury. Gloves can also protect against cuts and abrasions;
- avoid very bulky clothing that can inhibit free movement.

Provide information and training

Ensure you:

- make employees aware of the key points of your manual handling assessment;
- provide appropriate training relevant to the type of manual handling undertaken by the employee and the handling techniques, aids and devices they use;
- provide information to employees on maximum bundle sizes, heights and weights;
- emphasise that:
 - heavy bundles, ie above any agreed limits, should be moved using mechanical aids;
 - manual handling techniques only reduce the risk of injury if the overall load is kept within agreed limits for height, weight and size.

Advice for newsagents

The following advice will help newsagents reduce the risks from manual handling:

- Try to send back returns every day, or several times a week, to reduce the weight and number of bundles handled by the collection agent.
- Try to use a front-opening rather than a top-opening secure delivery box to 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 robust box or similar in the base to raise the load and avoid stooping when lifting out the order bundle. Ensure the height of the false base takes account of the size of the next day's order.
- Use a porter's trolley to move the bundles into and out of the shop.
- Before moving a bundle, make sure the quantities are manageable – it may be safer to split it.
- 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 you receive so they won't be too heavy.
- Use tote boxes where provided.
- Provide suitable gloves where necessary to reduce the risk of injury to the hands.
- Check with the local trading standards office about by-laws on any weight limits that may apply to juveniles. Take appropriate action to ensure that newspaper deliverers do not lift, carry or move anything that it is likely to cause them injury. Avoid overloading by using trolleys, splitting rounds, or transporting newspapers 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 you are trying to protect them from.

Useful links

National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN), Yeoman House, Sekforde Street, London EC1R 0HF Tel: 020 7253 4225 Fax: 020 7250 0927 Helpline for members: 0800 121 6376 www.nfrnonline.com

Further reading

Delivering newspapers safely: A guide for newsagents, publishers and deliverers
https://www.nfrnonline.com/assets/uploaded/files/Newspaper%20Society_LR.pdf

Manual handling at work: A brief guide Leaflet INDG143(rev3) HSE Books 2012
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.htm

Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended). Guidance on Regulations L23 (Third edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 978 0 7176 2823 0
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l23.htm

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

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