



Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

National Campaign – Manual Handling in Manufacturing Post-Intervention Telephone Survey – Queensland

In 2006-2007 a national manual handling compliance campaign in manufacturing was conducted. In Queensland, the wooden furniture and upholstered seat manufacturing industry was selected for this campaign. 146 workplaces in this industry sub sector were randomly selected to participate.

As part of this campaign 46 organisations were contacted by telephone prior to the campaign to participate in a pre-intervention survey in December 2006. A post-intervention telephone survey was conducted in September 2007 with 37 of these organisations (of the original 46). These findings represent the perceptions of the businesses that participated in the post-intervention telephone survey.

What were the results of the campaign?

Industry overview: 37 telephone interviews (September 2007)

It is important to note that survey participants indicated that this industry sector is in decline as the volume of imported furniture continues to rise, placing increasing pressure on the domestic industry. This is reflected in the changing demographics of the business sector shown below and anecdotal comments made by the owners of the smaller organisations.

- 3 companies no longer operate
- 2 companies have down-sized and no longer have employees
- 6 companies (including 2 that have down-sized) do not have employees i.e. are self-employed
- 70 per cent or 26 companies are made up of 1-4 employees or are self-employed
- 9 companies employee 5-19
- 2 companies employee 20-49

Implementation of new procedures to improve workplace manual handling procedures

Compliance with manual handling procedures in this industry sub sector is self-reported as high, as shown below:

- The audit process undertaken by inspectors identified that 86 per cent of companies complied with manual handling procedures in their workplace and that no changes were required to workplace practices.

- Where inspectors identified issues that required rectification, respondents reported all these issues were addressed, including an increase in the use of mechanical aids or changes to workplace design.

Over 85 per cent of companies reported compliance with manual handling requirements prior to the start of the campaign. However, after the intervention, during the post intervention telephone survey, respondents showed minimal understanding of key concepts.

Understanding of key concepts

- 92 per cent of respondents showed minimal to no understanding of the term 'manual handling'
- 76 per cent showed marginal to very low understanding of their legal responsibilities concerning manual handling
- 70 per cent showed marginal to very low understanding of risk management

While respondents demonstrated minimal understanding of the key concepts, 35 per cent of companies advised they had conducted risk assessments in relation to manual handling in their business. The quality of these risk assessments was unable to be ascertained from the telephone survey.

Penetration of information

- Nil to 15 per cent

Uptake of information from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) and other sources, including industry associations and unions, the professional sector and suppliers of equipment and materials was minimal; at nil to 15 per cent. The exception was information made available by the inspectors at the time of visits, which resulted in an increase to 32 per cent.

Additional information from specific industry sectors has been accessed by only three (3) companies or 8 per cent of respondents.

Role of inspectors

Business owners and supervisors reported that the inspectors' knowledge of procedures, laws and training requirements from the six (6) WHSQ regions in Queensland was very high to excellent. The inspectors' commitment to the programme and professional manner was well received in 100 per cent of workplaces – a clear demonstration of inspectors meeting the needs of their audience.

For further information visit www.deir.qld.gov.au or call 1300 369 915.

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