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Wholesale & Retail Trade

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE FOR A SAFE FUTURE

WRT Injuries from Contact with Objects

Every workplace—including retail—has its hazards, but no one expects to be injured. In 2014, nearly 580,000 wholesale and retail trade (WRT) employees were injured on the job or developed a work-related illness.[1] These incidents were largely preventable.

Each day in the United States, nearly 1,600 WRT employees are injured.

Furthermore, nearly 1/3rd of those reported cases, about 178,000, were sufficiently serious that the injured or ill employees were unable to return to work because they needed the time (day, days, weeks, months, or longer) to recover.

Safety hazards are common in WRT work settings and can cause a wide range of injuries and even deaths. These hazards are often found in back room storage areas, where space can be limited, the lighting is low, the floor is cluttered, and items protrude from storage racks. In the front sales areas, some products are still packaged in breakable glass containers that, when broken, can cause injuries.

Safety hazards also include being struck by equipment, machines, or having other physical contact with or against hard objects, which can cause physical injury. Additional safety hazards are transportation-related incidents and work-related violence.

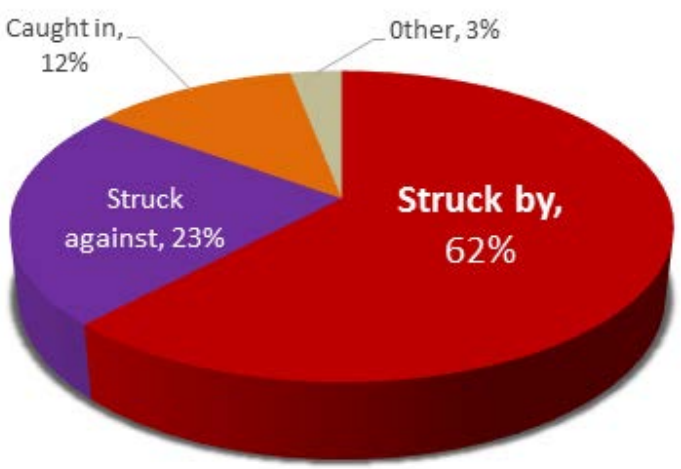
In 2014, the top three events in the WRT sector that were responsible for the majority of injuries and illnesses involving lost work days included: "Overexertion injuries and bodily reactions," with 63,820 reported injuries, followed by "Contact with objects," which accounted for 53,010 injuries, and "Slips, trips, and falls," with 43,890 reported injuries.[1]

Nearly one-third of all WRT-worker injuries was caused by a "Contact with objects" event.

OSHA labels the latter two events "Contact with objects" and "Slips, trips and falls" as safety hazards.[2]

Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the "Contact with objects" injuries by how the contact occurred. Clearly the majority of the injuries were attributed to being "Struck-by" an object or piece of equipment at 62%, whereas the category of "Struck-against" accounted for only 23% of the injuries. The injuries associated with being "Caught in or compressed" were 12%, with 3% unknown or other.[2]

Figure 1. Percent of "Contact with objects" by Nature of the Contacts in 2014 (WRT)[2]



Contact with objects includes machinery with moving parts that can catch parts of the body, as well as loose clothing or dangling jewelry. It's critical to work safely around machinery—in an instant, employees can lose a toe, a finger, or worse. Many workers have died or suffered permanent disability from an injury involving machinery or other equipment.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn to minimize exposure to hazards that can cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. PPE used in wholesale and retail work may include gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, and even hard hats. Head protection is often needed in large storage areas to protect workers from being struck by a falling box or product that may be dislodged from an overhead storage rack.

WRT Injuries from Contact with Objects *continued*

Tips for employees on the job

- » ***Never*** use a tool to do something for which it was not intended.
- » If using power tools or equipment, the employer should provide training in their safe use.
- » Make sure guards are in place to prevent unintended contact with moving parts.

[1] BLS [2015]. Numbers of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses by industry and case types, 2014 (Table 2). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/os/ostb4345.pdf .

[2] BLS [2015]. Table R4. Number of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work by industry and selected events or exposures leading to injury or illness, private industry, 2014. Washington, DC; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/case/ostb4370.pdf.

Loaded Forklift Killed Retail Warehouse Clerk

Although this fatality occurred a few years ago, in 2006, it serves as an example of how a forklift can quickly crush an inexperienced employee in a wholesale establishment. Specifically, an 18-year-old warehouse receiving clerk at an Oregon garden and supplies retailer was killed after a loaded forklift struck him in a warehouse aisle.

Event: The clerk and the forklift operator were working together to prepare new merchandise for storage and shipment. After a morning break, the forklift operator drove into the storage area, loaded the last pallet, and began backing down the aisle at a slight angle. Looking over his shoulder, the operator saw the warehouse receiving clerk walking up the aisle toward him. The operator yelled at the clerk, made eye contact, and hit the brakes, and tried to steer away. However, the forklift struck the clerk and pinned him against a metal shelf. The clerk died on the way to the hospital from blunt force trauma to the chest.

Background: The clerk was hired two weeks before the incident and had completed both safety on the job training that included product palletizing, inventory, and forklift operations on the freight dock. The forklift operator had also been trained and was certified to use a forklift; however, the operator normally used a different forklift, with brakes and gears that responded differently. Following this incident, the forklift operator reported that the brakes on the forklift did not respond fast enough.

The Oregon Worker Illness and Injury Prevention Program of the Oregon Public Health Division investigated and generated an Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (OR-FACE) report, FACE OR2006-44-1. Findings of their investigation are summarized in narrative reports that include recommendations for preventing similar events.

The FACE report recommends three points to keep pedestrian workers safe:

1. Forklift operators should always look in the direction of travel and keep a clear view.
2. Employers should ensure that workers stay clear of operating forklifts.
3. Pedestrians should make visual contact with the forklift operator and receive acknowledgment before entering an area where a forklift is operating.

The full report is located at https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/face/pdfs/06or044.pdf.

For further information on forklift safety, consult the NIOSH Alert (2001-109) "Preventing Injuries and Deaths of Workers Who Operate or Work Near Forklifts." More information on the "NIOSH's Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program is available" here.

To find previous editions, go to https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/wrt/resources/bulletins.html.

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