



# OSH in laundries and drycleaners

Sept 09

## Introduction

In 2009 WorkSafe conducted an inspection campaign in the laundry and drycleaning industry aimed at improving safety and health issues within the industry.

The checklists used by WorkSafe inspectors during this campaign are included in this newsletter. Please use the checklists to ensure your workplace meets the occupation safety and health legislation.

## What issues are included in the checklists?

A checklist has been developed which may assist you assess your workplace prior to being visited by an inspector. The checklist is included in this publication (from page four onwards).

Issues covered by the checklists include:

- Manual tasks
- Electrical
- Hazardous substances
- Falls from height
- Slips trips and falls
- Mobile plant
- Emergency procedures
- Chemical hazards
- New and young workers
- Machine guarding
- Pressure vessels
- First aid and amenities
- Fire and emergency safety
- Sharps and body fluids
- Housekeeping

Further information can be obtained by contacting WorkSafe on 9327 8777 or by visiting the website at [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)

## How are workers getting hurt

In the last five years the number of reported injuries in laundries and dry cleaners has significantly increased. Between 2002 and 2007, 46 workers were seriously injured and not able to return to work within 60 days.

Muscular stress while handling and lifting account for the majority of lost time injuries and disease claims in laundries and dry cleaners, followed by falls on the same level.

The most common types of injuries are sprains and strains of joints and adjacent muscles followed by open wounds and crush injuries. The most common injury sites are lower back and shoulders.

Statistics show that trolleys, fittings and bags are the most common causes of injuries.

## Manual tasks

### What are manual tasks?

Manual tasks are activities requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain a person, animal or thing.

Some of the most common tasks causing injuries in laundries and dry cleaners are:

- Pushing and pulling heavy trolleys
- Lifting and carrying laundry bags
- Loading and unloading washers and dryers
- Folding and sorting laundry

These are only a few of the manual tasks that can cause injury. Any task that involves high force, bad postures, static postures such as standing for long periods, or repeated movements can cause injury. These tasks need to be identified and changed to reduce the likelihood of injury.

Manual tasks can cause injury immediately (eg. lifting something heavy and injuring you back) or over time through gradual wear and tear on your body (eg. damaging your shoulder as a result of reaching into washers and dryers or folding and sorting laundry).

### What is the current legislation on manual tasks?

The *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* contains general duties and responsibilities placed upon employers and workers to ensure their own safety at work, and that of others who might be injured by the work. These duties extend to the prevention of manual handling injuries.

The Act also requires employers to investigate matters reported to them by workers, determine the action to be taken (if any), and notify the worker who made the report of the action to be taken.

The Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 require the employer to identify each hazard that is likely to arise from manual tasks and to assess the risk of injury or harm.

### How do I reduce the risk of lifting injuries

- Eliminate or reduce the need to lift, lower, carry or otherwise handle heavy bags of soiled laundry by:
  - using mechanical aids such as carts and slings;
  - use multiple laundry bags/carts to eliminate sorting;
  - minimising the distance loads are carried;
  - arranging work tasks and physical layout to minimise the number of times the load is lifted or carried;
  - keeping loads at hip height; and
  - using spring loaded inserts for laundry carts to keep the laundry at hip height.
- Use reaching aids such as tongs or wooden rake to pull the linen forward
- Ensure that large bags of soiled laundry are not more than two thirds full. Use smaller bags to ensure that they will not be too heavy
- Sort into soiled and unsoiled prior to putting in bags
- Test the weight of the bag before it is lifted.

Cont... on page 2

### Manual tasks cont...

#### How can manual handling hazards be identified?

Manual handling hazards can be identified by:

- reviewing hazard/injury reports;
- consulting with workers and safety and health representatives; and
- by observing tasks being performed.

#### What is a safe weight to lift?

There is no safe weight. The risk of injury increases as the weight of the load increases. Evaluating the risk posed by the weight of the object needs to take into account:

- how long the load is handled;
- how often the load is handled; and
- the physical characteristics of the individual.

#### Is it expensive to implement manual handling solutions?

The costs of manual handling solutions are justified when you consider the costs associated with injured workers requiring time off work.

#### What type of products could I use to address manual handling problems?

The type of products depend on the work being done include:

- back saver hoists;
- castors;
- hand trucks;
- load skates;
- pallet lifters;
- spring loaded carts;
- foot stools; and
- tailgate loaders
- trolleys;
- wheels;
- work stands;
- reaching aids;
- sit-stand stools;
- conveyors.

## Is using a trolley a good idea?

To avoid manual handling injuries the use of trolleys is recommended. However trolleys that are not maintained or overloaded can result in injury.

Strain injuries may occur when:

- trolleys are difficult to manoeuvre;
- trolley wheels are too small or poorly maintained;
- the trolleys and their loads are too heavy when other risk factors, such as the number of times a trolley is moved or the workplace layout, are taken into account;
- surfaces over which trolleys are pushed are uneven or mismatched;
- trolleys are moved over large distances or up steep slopes;
- trolleys are difficult to grip due to the absence or poor location of handles; and
- vision is impaired by an overloaded trolley.

## Safety priorities for working with hazardous substances

Lost time at work, illness and sometimes death are all outcomes of failing to store, use or dispose of hazardous substances properly. Great care is essential and following the information in this leaflet will reduce the risk of such serious outcomes.

Hazardous substances are any chemicals or other materials that may put people at risk. They include dry cleaning fluids (eg perchloroethylene), rust removers containing hydrogen fluoride and strong bleaches. Some substances may cause allergic reactions and other medical conditions of varying severity. Other substances may be corrosive, harmful or toxic.

Employers must identify any hazardous substances being used in their workplace and should question whether their use is essential. For example replace spotting agents containing hydrogen fluoride with a safer one.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) must be provided for each hazardous substance, identifying the ingredients, and giving health information and precautions for safe use and handling. Continual vigilance is essential.

During their inspection, inspectors will be looking for many of the common problems affecting the handling of hazardous substances that WorkSafe has found in workplaces.

The elements of the checklist do not cover all mandatory requirements under workplace safety and health laws. However, following the checklist will assist you to identify any shortcomings in your procedures or training and to correct or update them, thus helping you started meet your safety and health responsibilities.

In looking at safety in relation to hazardous substances and all workplace safety matters, please remember the three ThinkSafe steps:

- spot the hazard;
- assess the risk; and
- make the changes.

### How do I know if a substance is hazardous?

The material safety data sheet (MSDS) should contain an upfront statement like:

- this product is hazardous according to the criteria of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)
- this product is not hazardous according to the criteria of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)).

Words, such as "WARNING", "POISON" or "HAZARDOUS", on the label or information in the health hazards section of the MSDS that the substance is "toxic", "corrosive", "a sensitizer", "a carcinogen", "a teratogen" or "a mutagen" would mean that it is hazardous.

If you are not sure whether you have a hazardous substance or not then contact your supplier or the manufacturer/importer and ask for the current MSDS. MSDS are updated regularly and must be less than 5 years old.

## Managing hepatitis and HIV

Commercial linen services and other relevant workplaces should have documented policies and procedures for the collection, transport and storage of all linen. These should cover:

- distribution of clean linen
- bagging of used linen for collection
- storage and transport of used linen
- checking for sharps in used linen
- laundering of used linen.

Standard precautions should be followed when handling linen. The basic principles of linen management are as follows:

- All used linen should be considered potentially infectious whether visibly contaminated or not.
- All linen visibly contaminated and wet with blood or other body fluids/substances must be placed in an appropriate impermeable bag. Used linen, not visibly contaminated or wet, may be placed in a standard linen bag.
- Linen should be placed in appropriate bags at the point of generation.
- Clean and contaminated linen should be sorted, transported and stored separately. Colour-coded bags may be used for sorting.
- Linen bags should only be three-quarters filled and should be secured prior to transport.
- Leather or puncture-resistant gloves should be worn when handling visibly contaminated linen in case of sharps. Other used linen should be handled while wearing standard impermeable gloves
- Sharps containers should be available for disposal of any sharps found in the linen.

A hot water and detergent solution is adequate for cleaning most laundry items and equipment.

Source: National Code of Practice Hepatitis and HIV

## Slips, trips and falls

**Falls as a result of tripping over objects and falls from indoor steps and stairways are amongst the highest causes of injuries in laundries and drycleaners.**

### Incident

A worker suffered a serious fracture to her ankle when she slipped on a flattened cardboard carton, which had been placed on the floor. The floor had just been cleaned by staff close to the end of the day and the cardboard was put down to maintain the cleanliness of the floor.

### Factors

- The floor was wet and slippery;
- The cardboard presented a surface likely to lead to a slip or trip injury;
- Floor was cleaned whilst workers were still working; and
- The cardboard had been laid down in an area where staff regularly had to walk in the course of their work.

### Recommendations

- Flattened cardboard cartons should not be placed on floors where persons are likely to be working;
- Floor cleaning to take place at the end of the day when work has ceased; and
- Floor of the workplace should have an unbroken and slip resistant surface free from any obstruction that may cause a person to trip or fall.

## Regular OSH updates

Do you want receive regular emails from WorkSafe to keep you up to date with changes to occupational safety and health in Western Australia, then go to

[www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au) →services→mailing lists

## Registration of boilers and pressure vessels

Failure of a pressurized boiler can have catastrophic consequences. Lack of effective maintenance and periodic inspection can allow a dangerous condition to go undetected.

Boilers and pressure vessels categorised as hazard levels A, B, C must be registered with the WorkSafe Commissioner, and the registration number must be marked on the item of plant. A copy of the evidence of the registration is to be displayed on or near the item of plant. Regular inspections must be carried out as in the manufacturer's instructions.

## ThinkSafe Small Business Assistance Program

If you are a small business owner or manager (employing less than 20 full-time employees) and want to make your workplace safe, the ThinkSafe Small Business Assistance Program can help you.

The good news is that the help you get is:

- free (up to three hours assistance);
- easy to obtain;
- provided by an independent and qualified osh consultant; and
- is a simple process with clear and immediate outcomes.

To apply download and complete the online form from [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au) or call 1800 429 273.

# Checklists

## Manual tasks safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Risk assessments in relation to manual tasks have been conducted			
Practical control measures have been implemented to reduce or eliminate manual tasks; eg use of smaller laundry bags, bins with wheels			
Workers and managers have received adequate training in manual tasks, covering all the requirements in the <i>Code of Practice for Manual Tasks</i>			
Trolleys are available and used; trolley base is between waist and shoulder height			
Where practical, spring loaded trolleys are used			
Trolleys have been properly maintained; eg wheels move freely			
Ramps are in place in areas where trolleys are used to go from one level to another level			
Trolleys are not overloaded when pushing; full visibility is required			
Work benches and other work surfaces are at good height to reduce poor posture			
Reaching aids, such as hooks, tongs, are available where required			
Access to shelves, storage areas, cupboards, etc is not obstructed			
Heavy items are stored at waist height or bottom (as appropriate) Lighter and infrequently used items are stored at top shelves			

## Slips, trips and falls safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Floors, steps, stairs and ramps have unbroken and slip resistant surface			
Floors, steps, stairs and ramps are free from obstructions that may cause a person to trip or fall			
Outside floor surfaces are free from potholes and other obstructions			
Adequate drainage is in place in wet areas			
Clean as you go policy in place to reduce slip hazards in wet areas			
Drains and plumbing is not leaking, causing slip hazard			
Small changes in floor levels (eg at edge of tiles and at doorways) do not create a slip or trip hazard and are readily visible. For instance high visibility strip at edge where applicable			
Warning signs are available and erected near wet floors and spills			
Appropriate step ladder or safety steps are used - NO standing on milk crates			
Hand rails and guard rails are provided on stairs and ramps			
Slip resistant and enclosed footwear is required (dress code)			
Edge protection is provided where required			
Safe access is provided to areas such as mezzanine floors			

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<b>Electricity safety checklist</b>			
<b>Check</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Electrical installations are installed, constructed, maintained and tested to minimise the risk of electric shock or fire			
Components on the switchboard are clearly marked			
The switchboard is free of any obstructions			
Hand held portable equipment is protected by a non-portable residual current device (RCD), installed at the switchboard or built into a fixed socket			
Switchboard or fixed sockets are marked where RCD's are provided			
A testing program is in place for RCD's			
Flexible cords and extension cords are used in a safe manner (e.g. not lying across walkways)			
Plugs, sockets, extension leads and power boards are in good condition and protected from damage (eg not damaged, not overloaded)			
Electrical installations are protected from damage that would increase the risk of electric shock or fire, for instance a switchboard cover is provided			
Domestic type double adaptors are not used in a commercial environment			

<b>Hazardous substances safety checklist</b>			
<b>Check</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>n/a</b>
A register of hazardous substances is complete and current.			
The register includes a contents list and material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all hazardous substances, such as cleaning products, used from time to time at the workplace. The MSDS are < 5 years old			
The register of hazardous substances is readily available for workers			
The outcome of the risk assessment for all hazardous substances is recorded in the hazardous substances register			
Decanted bottles containing hazardous or other substances are labelled			
Practical control measures are in place to reduce risks relating to hazardous substances. For instance, substitute hazardous substances for non-hazardous substances, use substances in accordance with MSDS, do not use oven cleaner in spray bottles, ensure adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided and used			
PPE for use with hazardous substances is maintained and in good working order			
Training has been provided to workers working with hazardous substances. Training includes potential health risk and toxic effects, control measures to minimise risk, correct use of methods to reduce exposure, correct care and use PPE			
A record of hazardous substance training is kept at the workplace			
A spill procedure and clean up kit for Perchloroethylene/Tetrachlorethylene is provided			
If hydrofluoric acid is used at the workplace (eg present in rust removers), calcium gluconate gel is available and stored in a dark and cool place.			
Location of any asbestos on site (including insulation of steam and hot water pipes and asbestos present in building materials) has been identified and risk assessments have been conducted			
The outcome of the risk assessment for all hazardous substances is recorded in the hazardous substances register			

## Machinery and plant safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Every dangerous part of fixed, mobile or handheld powered plant (machinery) is securely guarded or fenced to prevent injury			
Safe work procedures are provided and documented to use and maintain machinery			
Manufacturer's manuals and operator instructions are readily available			
Where applicable, a noise assessment has been conducted and control measures have been implemented			
Cooling towers are treated with biocide and maintained as per manufacturer's instructions			
Boilers and pressure vessels (hazard level A, B and C) are registered with WorkSafe			
Boilers and pressure vessel registration is displayed			
Inspection records are made and kept in relation to plant (eg annual inspection reports for gas and oil fired boilers)			
Steam and hot water pipes are insulated			
Mobile plant have been maintained (eg vans, forklifts)			
Records are kept of maintenance, alterations and inspections of mobile plant			
Pre-start safety checks are carried out for mobile plant			
Mobile plant is in good working order			
Work area is organised for the safety of mobile plant operator and pedestrians			
Keys are not left behind in unattended mobile plant			
Fork lift operators hold a high risk work licence			

## Emergency procedures safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
An evacuation procedure to be followed in the event of a fire or other emergency is provided			
The evacuation procedure and a diagram of the workplace (showing the exits) are displayed in a prominent location			
Emergency egress enables safe egress in event of an emergency (e.g. doors are not obstructed)			
Exit signs have been provided and are maintained			
Portable fire extinguishers have been provided and maintained			
An adequately stocked first aid kit is provided at a central location			
An adequate number of people have been trained in first aid, having regard to the types of hazards and number of people in the workplace			
Procedures are in place for isolated workers (means of communication are available and procedures for regular contact are in place)			

## Noise safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
A risk assessment on noise has been conducted where it is likely that workers are exposed to noise levels of 85dB(A)			
So far as is practical, control measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of injury as a result of noise, including the provision of personal hearing protection, where exposure levels exceed 85dB(A) for 8hrs and/or Lc Peak 140dB(C)			
Workers have received information and training in relation to noise at the workplace			

## Infectious diseases and viruses safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Safe work procedures are in place incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard precautions</li> <li>• Appropriate handling of used needles/sharps and syringes</li> <li>• Handling/avoiding direct contact with visibly contaminated wet with blood or other body fluids/substances linen</li> <li>• Use of appropriate personal protective equipment</li> <li>• Immediate first aid response after needle stick incidents and exposure of blood/body fluids/substances to broken skin or mucous membranes</li> </ul>			
Standard precautions to reduce the risk of acquiring infections include good hygiene practices such as hand washing after handling linen (all linen should be considered potentially infectious), care of intact normal skin, protection of damaged skin, the use of personal protective equipment, containment of blood and body fluids, appropriate handling and disposing of sharps and syringes, regular cleaning of work areas, etc.			
Impermeable sharps container designated for the disposal of sharps including needles is provided and used			
Adequate personal protective equipment such as gloves, aprons, etc. is provided and used			
Workers have received training in relation to infectious diseases and viruses. Training includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe work procedures including standard precautions</li> <li>• Appropriate handling of needles/sharps and syringes</li> <li>• Handling/avoiding direct contact with visibly contaminated and wet with blood or other body fluids/substances linen</li> <li>• Use of appropriate personal protective equipment</li> <li>• Immediate first aid response after needle stick incidents and exposure of blood/body fluids/substances to broken skin or mucous membranes</li> </ul>			
Workers at risk are offered hepatitis B vaccinations			

## Induction and training safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Induction and training is provided in relation to emergency/evacuation procedures			
Information and training is provided in relation to hazard and accident reporting			
Safety induction and training is provided to new and young workers in relation to hazards in the workplace			
Information and training in the use, maintenance and storage of personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided			
Adequate supervision is in place to ensure that new and young workers are working in accordance with safety instructions			
The risk of injury or harm to visitors is reduced by means appropriate for the workplace and the type of work activity			
Induction and training is provided in a language understood by the workers			

## Other issues safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Reportable accidents have been notified to WorkSafe			
Lost time injuries or diseases, accidents and notified hazards have been investigated			
Workplace facilities (eg toilets, wash basins, other facilities) are in a clean conditions			
Portable ladders comply with Australian Standards (AS 1892.1 for metal ladders and AS 1892.2 (for wooden ladders)			
Gas cylinders are secured and not stored near ignition sources			
Safe work procedures are in place for changing gas cylinders			
Personal protective equipment is provided without any cost to workers			



# Information to help you meet the OSH laws

The WorkSafe website contains a number of publications which may assist you in making your workplace a safer place. Go to the WorkSafe website [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)

## **Code of practice**

- Fatigue management for commercial vehicle drivers
- First aid, workplace amenities and personal protective clothing
- Manual tasks
- National Code of Practice Hepatitis and HIV
- Prevention and control of legionnaires disease
- Prevention of falls at workplaces
- Working hours and risk management guidelines

## **Guidance note**

- Alcohol and other drugs at the workplaces
- Formal Consultative Processes
- General duty of care in Western Australian workplaces
- Plant in the workplace
- Preparing for emergency evacuations at the workplace
- Prevention of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Provision of information on hazardous substances (MSDS)
- Safe movement of vehicles at workplaces
- Working alone
- Working safely with forklifts

## **Bulletin**

- Gloves-selection use and maintenance
- Machine guarding
- New licence for high risk work
- Tips for investigating accidents and incidents

## **Guides**

- Application guide for a national certificate of competency
- Armed hold-ups and cash handling
- Priority area checklists
- The first step
- The next step

## **Fact sheets**

- Safety and health tips for laundry staff

