



## Fatal knife injury at abattoir

### Background

An abattoir worker sustained a fatal knife wound while working in the cattle head processing area when a spare hook fell from the processing rail holding the head and struck their knife. The knife was propelled into the worker's groin area and cut the femoral artery. The worker was not wearing a stab resistant apron at the time of the incident.

### Contributing factors

- Risk of a potentially fatal knife injury posed by the work in the head processing area not identified by industry.
- Spare hooks sitting on the processing rail in close proximity to the head being processed.
- No mechanism in place to prevent hooks from disengaging from the processing rail.
- No requirement to wear a stab resistant apron to protect the body from knife wounds in the head processing area.

### Action required

1. Assess the risks of working in the head processing area.
2. Ensure hooks and other equipment being utilised for head works are fit for purpose and appropriately secured.
3. Workers should wear stab resistant aprons when there is a risk of a stab injury to the torso or mid-thigh. Aprons should be sufficiently long enough to provide adequate protection depending upon the nature of the work being undertaken.

### Further information

Commission for Occupational Safety and Health

- Guidance note – [General duty of care in Western Australian workplaces](#)

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#### Regional Offices