



Safety alert 08/2013

Safe egress from refrigerated sea containers

Background

A recent inspection campaign identified that the majority of owned or hired refrigerated sea containers used at workplaces do not have appropriate means for safe egress. If a worker were to be locked in such container for a long period of time, the risk of injury or death as a result of hypothermia is high.

In one incident, a worker became trapped in a refrigerated sea container being used as a temporary refrigerator. The container did not enable the worker to exit from the inside when the door was shut. There were no warning devices or other means of drawing attention to the trapped worker. After 20 minutes, the worker's cry for help was heard by an alert passer-by. The worker was very lucky, as a cry for help is often not heard from outside an insulated cold storage sea container.

Contributing factors

- The refrigerated sea container doors were not fitted with an internal push-to-release door latch.
- No warning devices (ie. a bell or other means of drawing attention) were installed to alert people that a person was trapped.
- There were no systems in place to inform others that a worker intended to enter the refrigerator or how long they intended to be inside.
- There were no checks in place to ensure workers were not locked inside the refrigerator during the day or at the end of the working day.

Action required

1. All refrigerated and freezer sea containers used at workplaces (on hire or owned) must be fitted with an internal push-to-release door latch and warning devices to alert others when a person is trapped.
2. Systems must be implemented to inform others of work being done inside a refrigerated or freezer container, and regular checks must be done to ensure no one is trapped in such containers.
3. Workers must be trained and supervised in using safe systems of work.

Further information

- Additional guidance can be found in the 'National Construction Code Series 2013 Volume One, Building Code of Australia Class 2 to Class 9 Buildings', Part G1 – Minor Structures and Components.

Further information can be obtained from WorkSafe's web site or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email safety@commerce.wa.gov.au . A13996241

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