

# Safety Talks!

## Working Retail

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Many of us start our working lives in retail, and many senior workers also choose retail work. Whether a retail job is a steppingstone or a career, it needs to be done safely.

### WHAT'S THE DANGER

Repetitive strain injuries are a common injury in retail workplaces. These injuries cause damage to your muscles, tendons and nerves, and can develop over time when you do the same task over and over. Back injuries, falls, cuts and machine injuries also happen to retail employees.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- To prevent repetitive strain injuries, use good posture. Besides standing or sitting up straight, work with your arms and hands in a relaxed, natural position. Grasp items with your entire hand, not just your thumb and forefinger. Avoid twisting your wrists as you swipe the scanner, stock shelves or do other repetitive work. Take your scheduled breaks to move around, stretch and relax.
- Back injuries are also a common hazard of retail work, as you wrestle large boxes of product onto handcarts and lift groceries into customer vehicles. Lift safely by getting as close to the load as possible and squatting down to pick it up and put it back down. Avoid leaning over or bending or twisting your back.
- Slips and falls are a hazard in a retail store too. When you clean up spills or remove debris you are not only

protecting the customer from falls, you are protecting yourself.

- Shelf stocking also has its hazards. Use ladders and other climbing devices safely. Never attempt to “bunny hop” a ladder to a new location. Instead, climb down and move it.
- Properly use a safety knife to open cartons, and always pay attention to what you are doing if you don't want to leave a finger behind.
- Probably the most dangerous piece of equipment in a retail workplace is the compactor-shredder, a machine used to prepare paper, cardboard and other materials for recycling or disposal. Workers have died gruesome deaths in compacting and shredding machines in workplaces. Before you use one of these machines, make sure you get thorough training from a qualified instructor. Never attempt to bypass a machine safeguard because it's there to save your life. Even if you just work near such a machine, make sure you know how to stop it instantly in case someone else gets in trouble.

### FINAL WORD

*Many people build good careers in the retail sector — if they work safely from the start.* ■

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Repetitive work can cause injuries to your muscles, tendons and nerves.  
☐ True ☐ False
2. Correct body position is important in preventing repetitive strain injuries.  
☐ True ☐ False
3. When you repeatedly lift up small items, you should use your whole hand instead of using just your thumb and forefinger.  
☐ True ☐ False
4. Twisting your wrist is the safest way to run items across a scanner.  
☐ True ☐ False
5. Moving a ladder while you are still on it is a safe time-saving move.  
☐ True ☐ False

### What Would You Do?

Ethan was new on the job at the large retail store, and so far he hadn't received much in the way of safety training. A co-worker assigned him to feed packing materials into the compactor, but didn't tell him how to do so safely. What should Ethan do?

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T1906-02

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# Safety Talks!

FOR THE LEADER

Workplace Safety ■ T1906-02

## BEFORE THE TALK 7 PREPARATION TIPS

- 1 A retail workplace has a wide variety of occupations and job hazards. Be prepared to point out the hazards relevant to your crew.
- 2 Forklifts are found in many retail workplaces, including big box stores, lumberyards and store warehouses. Take this opportunity to remind everyone that special training and authorization is required to operate any kind of a forklift.
- 3 Pedestrian safety is important around forklifts too. If forklifts are in operation, workers need to stick to pedestrian walkways and stay alert.
- 4 Review your company's safety program in advance of this meeting so you can answer questions.
- 5 Review the locations of emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers and first aid supplies. Make sure everyone knows where they are.
- 6 Identify the qualified first aid attendants for each shift and make sure everyone knows how to contact them quickly.
- 7 What is your company's policy to protect your worker's security when they arrive and depart on night shifts? Review these procedures at the meeting.

■ For information on a variety of safety topics, check out Bongarde's online network for safety professionals at <http://www.SafetyXChange.org>

■ If you want the latest in job safety news, tips, photos, health-related articles, fatality reports and audio talks, sign up for Safety Smart! Weekly Briefing at <http://www.SafetySmart.com>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY: Each participant is to sign below, for record kept on file.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Answers to T1906-02 Quiz:  
1. True 2. True 3. True 4. False 5. False

## AFTER THE TALK CHECKLIST

■ Provided extra training to workers who did poorly on quiz

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Observed workers

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Refresher training

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Other (describe)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_