

# PRINTING INDUSTRY UPDATE

## FEBRUARY 2006

This, industry specific, newsletter is designed to supplement our normal quarterly newsletter and inform you of topical issues relating to the printing industry including:

### Upper Limb Disorders

Upper-limb disorders (ULDs), sometimes known as work related upper-limb disorders (WRULDs), are generally caused by small harmful movements that are repeated frequently. Examples of ULD's are tennis elbow, which can be caused by any repetitive action that involves the elbow, and carpal tunnel syndrome, most commonly associated with computer keyboards.

ULD's are common in the printing industry especially among staff in rewind and packing departments where the potentially harmful repetitive physical actions are common. Activities most likely to initiate ULD symptoms in staff include tearing and folding.

What can you do to eliminate or reduce the hazard to your staff from ULD's? Initially you should identify what tasks have the potential to present a risk to staff. Once this potential has been established you can consider some straightforward, and cost-effective, controls that will both reduce the risk to your staff and satisfy your insurer that these risks are being adequately managed.

Elimination or substitution of the procedure should remove the potential for harm. However, at least in the short-term such measures may not be the most practicable. In addition to carrying out a risk assessment some simple, relatively cost effective, measures to help control the risk include:

- Provide information and training on correct handling techniques and the risks associated with poor technique;
- Ensure staff are adequately supervised and are using any manual handling aids provided;
- Develop a system of job rotation to reduce exposure;
- Change the process to reduce the amount of force required to carry out the task;
- Implement frequent short breaks instead of one long break at lunch-time;
- Make workstations height adjustable to allow personnel to operate at a comfortable level without stooping or stretching, and adapt the layout, where possible, to suit individuals;
- Allow staff to carry out more than one step in a process. For example let them take the printed matter from the re-winder, fold (if required), pack, seal the box and add the box to the pallet. The additional actions have the effect of reducing exposure to the repetitive task;
- Organise work stations to minimise potentially harmful repetitive actions; and
- Ensure the workplace is kept warm.

You should encourage your staff to report ULD's and advise your staff on how to manage the risk.

Almost a third of all industrial accidents are caused by manual handling injuries. The latest Health and Safety Executive prosecution relating to a manual handling injury resulted in a fine of £8000 and costs in excess of £1300. The offence committed was a failure to provide adequate training, instruction and supervision. Are you doing enough to control the risk to your staff?

**For further information on this and any other health and safety issues, please speak to one of our advisors or call our offices.**

