

15
February
2023

WSH ALERT

FATAL ACCIDENT

Workers struck by toppled glass doors

On 2 February 2023, a group of workers was unpacking glass doors from a shipping container when nine of the doors (each weighing about 120 kg) toppled and struck two of the workers. One worker died of his injuries while the other had to be hospitalised.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the glass doors were being unpacked from the shipping container without any form of support or restraint.



Figure 1: Shipping container with the glass doors before unpacking.



Figure 2: Position of the toppled glass doors after the accident.

Transportation of heavy material not secured in a stable position, such as glass panels stacked vertically, poses a high risk of the material toppling onto workers. The WSH Council calls on all companies handling heavy materials, including glass panels, to undertake an urgent assessment of their safety measures.

What companies should do

Companies should urgently assess and ensure that their WSH management system includes the following measures or checks:

- **Container packing plan:** Request from the supplier a detailed packing plan which provides information on the contents of the shipping container such as the cargo inventory list, the weight of each cargo item, arrangement of cargo within the container, and how each item has been secured. If feasible, ask suppliers to pack the cargo in a stable or secured way, such that they will not topple during unpacking.
- **Safe unpacking method:** Obtain from the supplier the instructions for safe container unpacking. The unpacking method depends on how the cargo was packed. The following are two recommended packing/ unpacking methods:
 1. Bundling cargo into a crate or case within the container. The crate or case may then be moved in or out of the container using a purpose-built overhead travelling crane and/ or forklift with telescopic handlers.
 2. In the case of glass panels, strap them onto palletised A-frame racks which can be moved in or out of the container using pallet jacks and/ or forklifts.
- **Secured cargo:** If the cargo cannot be bundled into a crate or strapped onto A-frame racks, ensure the cargo is secured in place with mechanical support (e.g. props, braces or frames) and/ or restraint belts attached to the anchor points inside the container. To prevent toppling and facilitate unpacking, remove the supports and restraints one at a time only for the cargo being moved whilst ensuring that the remaining items are still secured.
- **Safe Work Procedure (SWP):** Establish and implement a SWP for handling heavy cargo with toppling risks. The SWP should include the safe unpacking method, risk controls, safe working positions, and the mechanical handling equipment to be used. Train workers (including contractors and outsourced workers) on the safe unpacking method and provide on-site supervision to ensure the SWPs are closely followed.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Provide workers with the necessary PPE (e.g. safety helmet, safety shoes, safety eyewear, gloves, high-visibility reflective vest) for the unpacking task.

For more information, refer to SS 663: 2020 Code of Practice for Safe Loading on Vehicles, WSH Council's [Code of Practice on WSH Risk Management](#), [WSH Guidelines on Safe Loading of Vehicles](#), and SafeWork NSW Australia's [Guide for Unpacking Shipping Containers](#).

Under the WSH Act, first-time corporate offenders may be sentenced to the maximum fine of \$500,000 whilst individuals can either be sentenced to the maximum fine of \$200,000 and/or an imprisonment not exceeding 2 years. Read more on the [WSH Act penalties](#).

During the extended Heightened Safety Period (1 September 2022 to 31 May 2023), the Ministry of Manpower will impose severe actions for serious WSH lapses, which include:

- Debarment from hiring new work pass holders
- Company leaders to personally account to MOM and take responsibility for rectifications, and attend a mandatory half-day in-person WSH training course.
- Engaging external auditors to conduct a thorough review of company's WSH processes.

* Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 31 January 2023. This may be subject to change as investigations are still on-going. Please also note that the recommendations provided here are not exhaustive and they are meant to enhance workplace safety and health so that a recurrence may be prevented. The information and recommendations provided are not to be construed as implying liability on any party nor should it be taken to encapsulate all the responsibilities and obligations under the law.

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