

E-BULLETIN Postal

#15. Friday, 23 August 2013



1. Loose loading is inherently hazardous
2. ROM more precise less, subject to arbitrary manipulation
3. CWU wins significant back pay for LPO member
4. Myth-busting Post's approach to health and safety
5. The union safety effect
6. CWU recommends Decipha agreement to members
7. Unrestrained dogs a problem for postal workers
8. UK Union backs tougher sentencing for dog attacks
9. Jobs, rights, fairness at stake for working people this election

1. Loose loading is inherently hazardous

Following a recent visit to the Parcel Delivery Centre at Potts Hill, Sydney to observe a trial of loose loading of parcels into Australia Post (AP) trucks, the CWU has raised concerns about a number of matters that were evident during our observation.

Inadequate risk assessment

Some of the numerous manual handling hazards identified during the visit were partially identified in the draft risk assessment and SOP but the ManTRA assessment tool favoured by AP, we believe, is insufficient for the complete identification of all of the risk factors. AP should be using the national Model Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual tasks before other tools are employed.

Inadequate risk controls

The risk controls that are proposed in order to reduce the ManTRA risk score (which initially is high and suggests high order risk) are primarily 'administrative controls' which are at the lower end of the Hierarchy of Controls. The national Model Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks discourages the use of team lifting as a permanent control measure. AP however advocates team lifting as the preferred work practice when handling parcels weighing more than 16 kg.

The AP risk controls are overly focused on worker-behaviour

Administrative risk controls place the onus for the safe performance of the work entirely on the worker. Controls that rely solely on the worker ignore variations in the work system that can make the controls inoperative; in the case of loose loading such variations would include increasing the speed of the conveyor, spacing the parcels too closely, unidentified heavy parcels, excessive bounce of the work platform, pressure to complete loading to meet a delivery schedule, etc.

Lack of sufficient engineering controls

The excessive bounce of the work platform and lateral twisting are clearly hazardous because they cause the workers to lose balance and makes smooth work actions difficult. This problem must have been evident when the conveyor was being assessed but has been considered unimportant or was not recognized as the problem it really is.

Reducing exposure is an important risk control

In the absence of effective engineering controls, the only effective control available is to minimize the exposure of workers to this manual work by minimizing and monitoring the time spent.

Loose loading is inherently hazardous

Loose loading parcels by manual handling methods is not safe as long as workers have to load below mid-thigh height and above shoulder height, reach more than 30 cm from their body, and repetitively bend and twist their spine. Controlling these risk factors by agreed engineering solutions should be implemented to ensure that acceptable feed rates are not exceeded and the bounce of the work platform is eliminated.

All these health and safety matters will be the subject of ongoing Union representation to AP management.

2. ROM more precise less, subject to arbitrary manipulation

In order to better manage the risks when determining staffing levels at post offices arising from the use by Australia Post (AP) management of ROM reviews, the Union has worked with AP to develop new and revised survey materials that are more precise and less subject to arbitrary manipulation.

These materials include:

- **Diary for Counter Review** that counter staff will use to record both non EPOS times and some EPOS times eg. longer bill payments due to slow customers and,
- **Diary for Back Office Work** that counter staff and PMs will use to record all back office tasks.

In addition reference guides for Postal Managers and Counter Staff now make it clear that the times produced automatically by the ROM system must be validated against actual times taken to perform these tasks, as **ROM times are suggested times only**. This means that variations in the time taken to complete a transaction due to the computer system slow in responding or another sort of technical malfunction, or a customer raises a query about the bill or the payment and the payment process is halted in order to respond etc, have to be acknowledged and recognised when it comes to determining staffing levels.

In relation to the default time allocations in ROM, AP has increased the time standard for OHS associated tasks but not for the other tasks which, we believe, are still allocated the bare minimum in terms of time in many instances.

However PMs will have the opportunity to input additional time into the ROM system for their post office. This along with more precise and less able to be manipulated data collected from the counter and back office diaries should ensure that sufficient time and therefore staffing is allocated for post office work.

This is the aim. Let's see how it works in practice during the trial. The new materials will be trialled in a small number of post offices in SA, Vic and NSW shortly. Members are encouraged to contact the Union on cwu@cwu.org.au with your comments.

3. CWU wins significant back pay for LPO member

The CWU's legal officer, Dahlia Khatab, has been assisting a member, formerly an employee of a Melbourne LPO who was in receipt of incorrect rate of pay under the relevant Award. After contacting the business owner who denied the claims, the union filed the matter in the Melbourne Magistrates Court to recover unpaid wages and superannuation. The Court made an Order that the employer pay the employee the sum owed, however the employer ignored the Order and no payments were made. The union was successful in its application to the Court for a warrant to seize the employer's property in order to satisfy judgment debt. This week the Sheriff executed the warrant and the member has received \$5700.00 in unpaid wages and superannuation.

4. Myth-busting Post's approach to health and safety

There are a number of myths that are common in the area of health and safety. A favourite Australia Post likes to pedal is that individual behaviour is the key to safety improvements. People need to make the right choices, don't they?

But the truth is that behaviour matters less when there is a safe and healthy work environment and **safe behaviour** will not make inherently unsafe conditions safe. So, for example, **safe behaviour** will not make long hours or regularly manually handling parcels weighing more than 16 kg. **safe**. Focusing on creating a safe and healthy environment means it will be safer and healthier for all, with fewer hazards to avoid. The working environment is most able to be controlled by those who *provide it* – the employer – and this should be the focus of improvements. It is unreasonable to expect a worker to be responsible for what an employer exposes them to. For example, cancer-causing chemicals or unidentified heavy parcels.

Research and coronial inquiries after workplace fatalities conclude an overwhelming majority of workplace incidents are as a result of poor work environments and poor work processes – not actions of individual workers.

For decades, independent research in Australia and internationally shows safe and healthy workplaces come from identifying and removing any hazards, rather than enforcing safe behaviours to work around the hazard.

Fix the problem, not the worker.

Remove the hazard or reduce the risk.

This is what AP needs to focus on with union involvement.

5. The union safety effect

One of the main reasons people join Unions like CWU and remain a member for many years is because of the great work Unions do improving people's safety at work.

The evidence is clear

A 2011 study found that unionised sites had nearly half the injury and illness rate of non-unionised sites.

A 2007 study of manual workers found unionised workplaces were less likely to have a fatal injury.

A 2004 analysis of research originally undertaken in 1995 confirmed that *"health and safety should not be left to management"*.

And a 2000 study *"found arrangements associated with Trade Unions ... lower the odds of injury and illness ... compared to arrangements that merely inform employees of OHS (related) issues."*

How it happens

Unions run the elections for HSRs. Unions deliver HSR training. Union trained HSRs know their rights and how to exercise them.

Unions support their workplace HSRs

Unions recognise risks – often long before management accept the risk even exists. Prime examples of this are asbestos and the effects of manual handling and stress on the health and well-being of workers.

IF you don't have a HSR in your workplace then contact your CWU Branch about electing a HSR. If you are a HSR and have not been trained in the new Work Health and Safety Act 2011 then contact your Union about the next available Union course.

6. CWU recommends Decipha agreement to members

Further to e-bulletin story of 9th August 2013 regarding agreement reached in principle with Decipha Pty Limited, the CWU's Divisional Executive (DE) has voted to recommend that all union members support the new EBA offer reached with Decipha, expressing the view that *"the proposed Decipha EBA offer provides for a fair and reasonable outcome in providing improvements in pay levels along with safeguards and protections for terms and conditions of employment of all employees covered by the EBA."*

As well the DE commended the CEPU negotiation team for securing a new Decipha EBA for all union members and potential union members. This included full time CEPU officials and local job reps.

Subject to the majority employee endorsement of the Decipha EBA, DE authorised the Divisional Secretary to take all steps necessary in making application to the Fair Work Commission for the CEPU to be covered by the Agreement accordingly.

7. Unrestrained dogs a problem for postal workers

AP workers are exposed to dogs on the street and when entering properties to deliver the mail.

Unrestrained dogs can cause injury not just by biting but by knocking posties off their bike or rushing at wheels and causing an accident and by psychological injury.

AP has developed an information sheet ***Dealing with Dogs – Advice for workers*** that should be provided to workers, along with a manager's guide to help workplace managers identify and manage dog risks.

The material advises that the best way to avoid injury is to stay away from unrestrained dogs and those not under effective control. Good advice. But also **report unrestrained, wandering and menacing dogs to your HSR as well as your manager.** And report dogs with unsecure fences or enclosures.

AP has a duty of care to its employees. Workers should not be exposed to situations where they are fearful of being menaced or attacked. Irresponsible dog ownership causes injury and distress and must be tackled. **Talk to your HSR or union delegate if you are exposed to dog risks.**

8. UK Union backs tougher sentencing for dog attacks

The Communication Workers Union in the UK has welcomed a government consultation on proposed tougher penalties for owners of dangerous dogs. The Union has been critical of the government for taking so long to come forward with legislation to tackle dog attacks after promising to do so back in February.



The consultation runs until 1st September and proposes to extend the powers within the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 so that legal action against owners can be taken even where dog attacks take place on private property. It also proposes increasing the current maximum penalty for an aggravated dog attack of two years in prison.

Royal Mail also welcomed the consultation saying that dog attacks were a “significant hazard” for its staff, with more than 5,500 attacks on postmen and women since April 2011.

It said the fact that current laws do not allow action to be taken where dog attacks occur on private property was a particular problem for its delivery staff, who each visit hundreds of private addresses every day on delivery rounds.

9. Jobs, rights, fairness at stake for working people this election

The election to be held on 7 September will be a choice between a government that respects workers rights and an opposition that wants to give employers more power. Between a Government that has acted to protect jobs and an opposition that simply wants to erode rights at work and job security.

The key issues for Australian unions this election include: the protection of work entitlements, job security, investment in infrastructure and support for jobs and training said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

“We will be campaigning for a future where we value rights at work and invest in jobs and the industries of the future,” Ms Kearney said.

“This government has delivered paid parental leave, a plan for better school funding, action on climate change that supports jobs and industry, a national disability care scheme, increased superannuation and a host of measures to support working people like better pay for community workers and new laws to make sure employers advertise locally before bringing in temporary overseas workers.



“These are great outcomes for working people. We want to build on these reforms with the next government, not put them at risk.”



Download our CWU phone app



**We welcome your comments and contributions –
send us an email and let us know what you think via cwu@cwu.org.au
Check out our webpage at www.cwu.org.au**