



Welcome to the safe@work Retail Module.

Have you read the General Module, completed the test and printed your safe@work General Award of Attainment?

The Retail Module should be done AFTER the General Module.

If it is some time since you have completed the General Module you should read the Review Module. The test for this module contains some questions based on the Review Module.

There are common hazards that exist in the retail industry. It is important to learn about these hazards and how they can be controlled so that people at work are not exposed to risk.

The Retail Module contains information on:

- Manual Handling
- Slips, Trips and Falls
- Fatigue
- Machinery and Equipment
- Electricity and
- Cash Handling and Opening & Closing Procedures.

Within the retail industry, you may be involved in customer service and sales, marketing, packaging and stacking shelves, moving trolleys and operating mechanical equipment such as slicing machines.

Your employer must make sure you are properly trained and supervised and given instructions for safe work procedures.

Key Point

You must follow work procedures and not put the health or safety of others in the work place at risk.

Manual Handling

In the retail industry, manual handling tasks may include packing and unpacking stock, stacking shelves, taking cartons on and off pallets, hanging up clothing on racks, moving mobile racks, moving trolleys and cleaning floors and shelves.

Most injuries in the retail industry result from manual handling activities. Strain injuries occur through sudden overexertion or continuous overuse. Back injuries can result in some of the most serious types of strain. Too much strain on your back can lead to long-term damage.



As a young employee, you are more likely to be injured through manual handling work than an older employee. Constant muscular aches or pains may indicate that there is too much physical stress.

Manual handling risk in the retail industry is often associated with

- frequent or prolonged manual handling tasks
- bending where the hands pass below mid-thigh level
- reaching above the shoulder
- twisting the back
- handling objects that are difficult or awkward to move, due to their weight, shape, size or instability, and
- handling objects placed or stored below mid-thigh level or above the shoulder.

Ways to reduce the risk

Your employer must assess manual handling risk and control manual handling problems. You must be provided with instruction and training for manual handling tasks. Risk controls include:

- **eliminating double handling** by reducing the number of times an object is handled, and where possible moving the stock directly from delivery to display
- **changing the size or weight of packaging** by breaking down large loads into smaller ones, and finding out if stock is available in smaller sizes. Smaller loads can be lifted and handled more easily
- **reducing push/pull forces** e.g. removing the need for bending, twisting and reaching movements when placing items on a shelf, rack or pallet, or limiting the number of shopping trolleys to be collected at one time
- **providing suitable equipment** such as trolleys or pallet jacks to move stock, and a stable, sturdy step ladder to allow you to stack shelves at the correct height, and
- **providing a safe workplace layout** which allows you enough space to move and work safely.
- safely.

Key Point

Even though you may be young and new to the job, you should speak up - talk to your supervisor - if you feel your job is too heavy, too difficult, too tiring or puts you at risk of injury.

Moving trolleys

Collecting and moving shopping trolleys at shopping centres can be hazardous. Trolleys are usually tied together using a strap attachment to return them to the store. The use of elastic or "occy" straps is hazardous and can result in serious injury or death.

Your employer should provide a lightweight, strong, non-elastic strap and make sure the trolleys are well maintained. You must also receive training in safe work procedures.



You should push the trolleys rather than pull them, and move no more than 12 trolleys by yourself on a flat level surface. This number may vary according to a risk assessment for each individual trolley collector, and depending on factors such as the age and strength of the trolley collector.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Key Point

Slippery and uneven floors in the work place are a serious hazard and can result in far more serious accidents than simply tripping or falling over.

A slip or fall can cause injury to the arms, legs, back, neck or head. Neck and head injuries can cause damage to the spinal cord and nervous system. Many employees have suffered permanent disabling injuries or death as a result of a fall.

Slippery surfaces in the retail industry can be found in places such as cool rooms, freezers, deli areas, meat rooms, bakery areas, food preparation areas, storage areas and any area where moist products and liquids are likely to be spilled.

Ways to reduce the risk

Your employer can reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls by providing a suitable non-slip floor surface, good lighting and safe work procedures. In some work places, floor surfaces can be chemically treated to increase traction and ramps provided where floor levels change.

You must follow instructions and safe work procedures provided by your employer, which may include:

- cleaning all spills immediately
- placing "slippery floor" signs in public areas when spills are being cleaned or the floor is wet
- making sure there are no trailing electrical cords on the floor
- keeping floors and walkways free of stock, boxes, cartons, equipment and rubbish
- using steps and ladders correctly, and
- wearing low-heeled shoes with good tread.

Fatigue

Often in the retail industry you may have to stand up for long periods of time. This can cause discomfort, and back pain in particular may be made worse. There are some things you and your employer can do to reduce fatigue.

Your employer could provide a stool or "standing chair", and vary your tasks so that you do not have to stand for long periods of time.

You should wear low heeled, comfortable, covered shoes to help reduce fatigue.



It is important to take regular rest breaks. Your employer should allocate time for rest breaks and to vary your tasks throughout the day, and also enough time for you to gradually get used to a new job.

Talk to your employer or supervisor if a stool is not provided, or if you have difficulty in trying to handle too many demands at once.

Key Point

Even though you may be young and new to the job you should speak up - talk to your supervisor - if you feel your job is too heavy, too difficult, too tiring or puts you at risk of injury.

Machinery and Equipment

A variety of machinery and equipment is used in the retail industry including compactors, carton crushers, wrapping and packing machines, meat and bread slicers, dough mixers, chicken rotisseries, and doughnut machines.

Note: Students on work experience must not use powered cutting equipment or box crushers. This information is designed to give students an understanding of the hazard and some of its risk control measures.

Your employer must make sure all machinery and equipment is in safe working condition and must provide instruction and training before you use it.

Guards are often attached to mechanical equipment to protect you from the moving parts. For example, guards are provided on cutting and slicing machines, industrial cake mixers, dough machines and compactors.

Your employer must make sure you leave the guards in place, and that they are replaced by an authorised person if they have been removed for cleaning or maintenance. Machinery must be locked out and isolated during cleaning and maintenance to prevent it being turned on.

Working safely with sharp equipment and tools

Employees may need to use sharp knives, scissors, tools and equipment in the retail industry. Examples include carton trimmers to cut open cardboard cartons, knives and food slicers for food preparation, and trimmers and saws to cut materials to length in hardware stores.

Note: Students on work experience must not use knives or powered cutting equipment. This information is designed to give students an understanding of the hazard and some of its risk control measures.

Key Point

Your employer must train workers in the safe use and handling of sharp equipment and tools.



Requirements should include:

- using appliances and tools only for the purpose for which they are designed
- keeping cutting tools clean and sharp
- keeping all guards in place and keep your fingers and body away from any moving parts
- cutting away from your body when using knives or trimmers
- always putting sharp knives and tools away after use, and
- not leaving knives or slicing blades in dish water, as others may cut themselves when they put their hands in the water.

Electricity

The machinery and equipment you will use in the retail industry is usually operated by electricity.

Note: Students on work experience must not undertake any task which may place them at risk from electrical sources.

Your employer must make sure all electrical machinery and equipment is kept in good working order, electrical plugs and switches are not damaged, cords are not split or frayed, and are tested and checked regularly for damage.

Note: Students on work experience must not use powered cutting equipment or box crushers

Key Point

There must be a system in place for locking out and isolating electrical machinery during maintenance, cleaning and repairs to prevent it being accidentally turned on.

You must follow instructions for using electrical equipment. These should include:

- switching off appliances at the power point before you pull out the plug
- disconnecting broken appliances and not using frayed cords or broken power points
- not using too many appliances from the same power point, and
- always keeping electrical cords off the floor to reduce the risk of damage from drag or contact with sharp objects.

Cash Handling and Opening and Closing Procedures

Cash handling

In a work place where cash is handled, you are more likely to face the threat of robbery or attack.

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To reduce the risk of injury or harm, employers should have cash handling procedures and must train you in these procedures.

Procedures should cover:

- removal of excess cash from the till to safe storage
- displaying signs where they can be clearly seen informing customers of limited cash holdings
- not handling cash in front of customers, and
- delivery and deposit of money at the bank.

Opening and closing procedures

Your employer should have simple written procedures for opening and closing the shop. This is important if the shop is isolated, or if you have to open and close it when the employer or other employees are not around. It is safer if more than one person opens or closes the shop. A work experience student should always be supervised.

Procedures should cover checking to make sure:

- there are no suspicious people or vehicles around when you enter or leave the work place
- no one has broken in - if there are signs of a break-in, you must know what action to take
- before leaving, that the safe (if there is one) and all entries, exits and windows are securely locked, and
- there are no unauthorised persons remaining on the premises.

Key Point

You should be made aware of procedures for handling cash and opening and closing and you should follow them.

Self-Assessment Questions

Now try the self-assessment questions. Before starting the questions, be sure to enter your name and the name of the school exactly as you want it to appear on your Award of Attainment. We ask you to provide these details so that you can be issued with the Award of Attainment.

There are 16 questions. If you get 12 or more correct you can print an online safe@work Award of Attainment. The Principal of your school will then sign the Award of Attainment and validate it with the school stamp.