

BULLETIN

SAFETY IN HARDWARE SUPPLIER YARDS

Timber and building hardware merchants are being reminded to assess and manage their risks following a recent case where a builder was injured by timber that fell from a high rack.

INCIDENT

A customer was injured – and one year after the incident was still unable to work – after a bundle of weatherboards weighing over 300 kg fell from height and struck him in the back when he was outside in a building supplies merchant’s timber yard.

CIRCUMSTANCES

A forklift was being used to retrieve a pack of timber, stored three metres above the ground, from a cantilever racking system. When the pack of timber was lifted by the forklift, a pack of weatherboards stored in the adjacent stack was dislodged and fell onto a customer.

Our investigation found that the weatherboards had been stacked incorrectly, overlapping the wood in the next bay by 10 cm, and that the weekly and monthly checks failed to identify this hazard.

Some of the risks:

- > stacking of timber at height
- > exclusion zones around machinery
- > uncontrolled public access to yards.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

The first task is conducting a risk assessment. Where one already exists, we recommend that it is regularly reviewed.

When reviewing the risk assessment and deciding on the management actions it is a good to involve your teams as a safe workplace is more easily achieved when everyone involved in the work communicates with each other to identify risks and how to manage them.



You should also regularly check that the systems and procedures that you have developed to manage the risks you identified are being followed.

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Look at the exclusion zone around heavy machinery operating in the yard. Would customers be safe as in this case where a product weighing around 300 kg fell from the rack next to the one where the product is being lifted?

When heavy machinery is in operation you may consider implementing:

- > a safe zone
- > a policy of asking customers to stay in their vehicles until loading or unloading is complete.

Properly train staff around stacking and storing building materials.

Provide training and support your staff to communicate with customers on where they need to be when machinery is operating on site.

Many yards have no indication of where customers should, or shouldn't park. Make it clear to customers where they should park their vehicles when they arrive at your yard.

This is not about removing all risk. It is about being sensible and doing what is reasonably practicable to keep your staff and customers safe while they are at your business.