

Hazard Alert

Recent injuries in Ontario folding cartons sector

What happened?

Failing to lock out properly, or relying on someone else to protect you could lead to horrific injuries and changes to lifestyle. In the folding carton over the past five years, there have been many workers who have lost limbs or fingers due to improper lock out. Personal safety means you must look after yourself by fully locking out equipment when working, and don't assume or rely on others to protect you. In some instances, it can be easier to open an interlocked door to shut the equipment down, but that doesn't protect you because that door can close and re-engage the equipment, putting a worker in a very bad spot and most likely, causing severe injury.

Overexertion and bodily reaction continues to be the leading cause of lost-time injuries in the folding cartons sector. MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders) continue to be a problem for sheet and corrugate plants. The sector, although moving toward automation, still has plenty of firms that are hands-on. Many of the presses used in the sector are hand-fed, requiring workers to work several hours a day doing the same tasks, using the same muscle groups. For these smaller plants, the expense of upgrading to newer more modern equipment (e.g. pre-feeders, scissor lifts) is out of range.

How could these incidents have been prevented?

For MSDs, identifying the risk factors (force, posture and repetition) can lead us to the area that needs to be addressed. Small changes, such as job rotation, can fix the problem; it doesn't necessarily mean new updated machines that are expensive, but subtle, simple changes can help relieve pain and suffering.

Where do we start? Having a 'Strains and Sprains Committee' can get the ball rolling. The Employee Discomfort Survey, available free at workplacesafetynorth.ca, allows workers to identify where there are problems. Once the problems are identified, the committee can focus on the solutions.

For lock out, workers need to be given the time to lock out for every instance that requires it. Tolerance levels need to be consistent, making sure that all workers are treated equally. Lock out has to be looked at, and consistently enforced, as part of doing business.

Lock out Program Survey – Several free tools are available from WSN to help with proper lock out. Determining where your organization stands can be done with the use of a lock out program survey. This survey looks at various measures that need to be taken and compares this to your organization. The gap between what you do and what needs to be done, is the action plan.



For more information, contact your local WSN Health and Safety Specialist:
workplacesafetynorth.ca/consulting/findyourspecialist