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WorkSafe blitz on manual handling at food manufacturers

A state-wide campaign targeting manual handling safety begins on 1 July when food manufacturers and processors will be visited by WorkSafe Victoria inspectors.

Improvement and Prohibition Notices will be issued where safety issues are found. Prosecutions will follow if serious breaches are identified.

The director of WorkSafe's Manufacturing, Logistics and Agriculture Division, Trevor Martin said the industry needs to do more to improve safety.

"There were more than 12,000 workplace injury insurance claims as a result of manual handling injuries in 2006-07.

"More than 900 were in the food manufacturing sector, accounting for 3% of the state's total injury claims.

"Along with repetitive bending and twisting, the lifting of boxes, drums and bags of ingredients cause nearly 40% of manual handling injuries in the food manufacturing sector," Mr Martin said.

"The average cost to treat and rehabilitate each of these manual handling injuries exceeds \$9,000.

Mr Martin said business' health and safety obligations are well known, as are the means of preventing injuries.

"Materials-handling equipment such as a pallet lifter with a turntable will cost between \$1,000 and \$3,000.

"Mechanical aids can increase productivity while the business costs associated with managing claims and potential legal and reputational issues can be minimised."

"Creating a safer, more productive workplace requires thought and action. Once the process has begun, it needs to be followed through.

"Too often WorkSafe inspectors find that plans have been developed, but not put into effect," Mr Martin said.

WorkSafe has publications aimed at manufacturers of all types.

They can be found online at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or by calling the WorkSafe Advisory Service on 1800 136 089.

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