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Republic of Latvia

Cabinet

Regulation No. 344

Adopted 6 August 2002

Labour Protection Requirements, when Moving Heavy Loads

Issued pursuant to Section 25, Clause 5 of the Labour Protection Law

1. These Regulations prescribe the requirements for the safety and health protection of employees in workplaces (labour protection requirements), where employees move heavy articles — objects, human beings or animals (hereinafter — heavy loads) — by physical force (moving heavy loads directly or with the help of auxiliary devices) and where there is a risk of injury (in particular back injury).
2. Employers shall take organisational measures or utilise appropriate means, in particular mechanical equipment, in order to avoid movement of heavy loads by physical force.
3. Employers shall ensure the evaluation of the work environment risk in accordance with the procedures prescribed by regulatory enactments, taking into account the risk factors specified in the Annex to these Regulations.
4. In the evaluation of the work environment risk, employers shall:
 - 4.1. establish a group for the evaluation of risk factors and involve in such group occupational health experts having knowledge in work physiology and ergonomics, and the employees or their trusted representatives;
 - 4.2. determine the characteristic features of heavy loads, taking into account Paragraph 1 of the Annex to these Regulations;
 - 4.3. evaluate the amount and nature of the work environment risks, and determine labour protection measures that are necessary in order to avoid or reduce the work environment risks; and
 - 4.4. take into account the recorded accidents at work and occupational diseases, and such indicators as change and work dissatisfaction of employees, and productivity.
5. If it is not possible to avoid moving heavy loads by physical force, employers shall:
 - 5.1. organise their work so that the safety and health of employees would be guaranteed;

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5.2. perform appropriate labour protection measures in order to prevent or reduce to the minimum the risks of acquiring injuries to employees (in particular — back injuries), taking into account the conditions specified in the Annex to these Regulations;

5.3. provide employees with appropriate auxiliary devices (for example, spades, pitchforks, trolleys, levers, roller conveyors); and

5.4. as far as possible, automate the process of moving heavy loads.

6. When assigning work duties to an employee, the employer shall take into account the suitability and physical capacity of the employee.

7. In order to ensure the safety and health of employees, employers shall provide the employees whose work is related to moving heavy loads by physical force and their trusted representatives with the training, in which knowledge regarding the principles of moving heavy loads and ergonomics is acquired, and shall provide exact information regarding the weight, position of the centre of gravity and other essential factors of the load to be moved.

8. Employers shall co-operate with the employees and their trusted representatives and shall consult with them regarding matters of labour protection (also regarding the movement of heavy loads) in accordance with the Labour Protection Law.

9. The Ministry of Welfare in co-operation with the relevant technical committee for standardisation shall recommend to the non-profit-making organisation State limited liability company *Latvijas standarts* [Latvian Standard] the standards to be adapted.

10. The non-profit-making organisation State limited liability company *Latvijas standarts* shall submit for publication in the newspaper *Latvijas Vēstnesis* [official gazette of the Government of Latvia] the Latvian national standards which may be applied toward fulfilment of the safety requirements set out in these Regulations.

11. Employers shall be responsible for compliance with these Regulations.

12. The compliance with these Regulations shall be controlled by the State Labour Inspection.

Prime Minister

A. Bērziņš

Minister for Welfare

V. Jaksons

Risk Factors in the Evaluation of Possibility of Injuries (in Particular Back Injuries) if Heavy Loads are Moved by Physical Force

1. When moving heavy loads by physical force, there is a risk that the employee may get an injury if the heavy load (freight):
 - 1.1. is too heavy or too large;
 - 1.2. is unwieldy or difficult to grasp;
 - 1.3. is unstable or has contents likely to shift;
 - 1.4. must be held or moved with stretched arms or by bending or turning the body; or
 - 1.5. because of its contours or consistency, may cause an injury in the event of collision with the employee.

2. Physical load may cause an injury if:
 - 2.1. the load is too great;
 - 2.2. moving heavy loads is possible only by bending or turning the body;
 - 2.3. the heavy loads to be moved may move unexpectedly; or
 - 2.4. when moving heavy loads, the body is in an unstable posture.

3. There is a risk that employees may get an injury if:
 - 3.1. the work rooms are not sufficiently large, in particular vertically, to carry out the activity;
 - 3.2. the floor of the work rooms is uneven, slippery or the working surface is unstable;
 - 3.3. the handling of loads at a safe height is not possible at the workplace or the employee cannot take a stable position;
 - 3.4. there are variations in the level of the floor or the working surface, as a result of which the load has to be moved at different heights;
 - 3.5. the temperature or humidity in the work rooms is unsuitable or there is no ventilation; or
 - 3.6. the lighting is insufficient in the work rooms.

4. Employees may get an injury during the work process due to the following reasons:
 - 4.1. the employees have not had a possibility to have a sufficient rest or recovery;
 - 4.2. heavy loads are to be moved over a large distance;
 - 4.3. frequent or prolonged physical effort by the employees (mainly involving the spine);or
 - 4.4. the determined rate of work is too fast and cannot be altered by the employee.

5. There is a risk of injury if employees:

- 5.1. are physically unsuited to carry out the specific task;
- 5.2. wear unsuitable clothing and footwear; or
- 5.3. have not been adequately and sufficiently trained.

Minister for Welfare

V. Jaksons