

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH RELATED COSTS AND COST POTENTIAL IN A GARAGE DOOR MANUFACTURING LOADING DOCK

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ABSTRACT

Manual material handling (MMH) of large, cumbersome products can pose significant occupational risks. The potential impact of handling such products was studied at the loading dock of a local garage door manufacturing facility. While the facility studied did not currently have a significant injury experience, the potential for MMH injuries as well as damage to product from handling was considered. Multiple potential risks and associated costs of current loading procedures were explored.

Current loading procedures consist of a 6-8 person team of workers who load hundreds of doors per day, each weighing up to 200-300 pounds without the benefit of assistive devices. Due to the wide variability in lengths and stacking order of doors, they are often lifted from near ground level to various heights ranging from ground level to 7 feet. This lifting and handling presents the potential for musculoskeletal injuries to both the low back and shoulder due to factors of high force, high repetition, working overhead, and long lifting duration. To date, workers compensation costs in this area have been relatively low, although there is a potential for significant costs. A single MMH injury to the low back could represent significant costs and severely impact profit margins at this facility. In addition, there are indirect costs, such as employee turnover and absentee rate, which result in further costs to the company. It is proposed that the implementation of cost-effective engineering and administrative changes into the loading process can positively and significantly impact worker health, improve productivity by minimizing unnecessary handling, and result in significant cost-avoidance, and therefore a more profitable company.

