Key Safety Hazards Retail Workers Face During Holiday Shopping Season



Like any other workers, retail workers face certain safety hazards on a regular basis. But during the holiday shopping season, those every day hazards may be heightened and new hazards added to the mix. So employers in the retail sector should be especially vigilant in protecting their workers this time of year.

According to the NIOSH Science Blog, the following are some of the hazards faced by retail workers during the holiday season:

Crowd Management

Retail stores should take steps to protect workers from being trampled or otherwise injured by crazed mobs of shoppers. Use this crowd control safety checklist to plan the safety measures you should have in place when expecting large groups of shoppers, whether for big holiday sales or any special event during the year.

Workplace Violence

Although violence erupting at Black Friday sales makes headlines, retail workers face the threat of violence every day. Retail businesses at high risk of assaults and violent acts include convenience stores, gas stations and businesses that sell alcoholic beverages. Jobs that require employees to

work alone at night, handle money and/or sell alcohol, particularly in poorly lit areas, have an increased risk for workplace violence. Here are a few recommendations for employers to help keep workers safe:

- Keep windows from being covered up by signs or displays.
- Ensure adequate lighting inside and outside of the workplace.
- Make sure alarms and cameras work.
- Educate workers about the security and safety plan.
- Make sure all workers know which doors should stay locked'and check those doors often.

Long Hours and Shiftwork

Extending shopping hours can mean longer and different shifts for workers. Working irregular shifts or night hours has been associated with disrupted or insufficient sleep, which can impact workers' mental and physical health in several ways. So consider implementing fatigue management strategies to eliminate or minimize these impacts.

Prolonged Standing

Extended holiday shopping hours can also result in prolonged standing for workers, which can result in low back pain, fatigue, muscle pain, leg swelling, tiredness, and body part discomfort. There's also significant evidence that prolonged standing at work (primarily in one place, such as at a checkout counter) increases the risk of low back pain, cardiovascular problems and pregnancy issues. Interventions such as floor mats, shoe inserts, adjustable chairs, sit'stand workstations, and compression stockings have been used by employees to reduce the pain, discomfort and fatigue from prolonged standing.

Musculoskeletal Injuries

Because retail workers handle various kinds of materials,

they’re at risk of developing musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) from overexertion, improper lifting techniques, etc. To protect workers from MSIs while handling materials manually, take these 5 steps and use this manual handling risk assessment worksheet.