



Occupational Health & Safety Authority

## Media Release

### Free Information Material on MSDs

07.11.08

The Occupational Health and Safety Authority has received a series of publications related to musculoskeletal disorders and the manual handling of loads. The material available in Malta includes information sheets, reports, posters, guidance as well as a DVD. There is generic information as well as more specific targeting the health, retail trade and construction sector.

Pain, discomfort and loss of function in the back, neck and extremities are common among working people. These ailments are commonly referred to as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Within the member states of the European Union, about 25 % of workers complain of backache and about 23 % report muscular pain, making MSDs the most frequently reported work-related health problem.

In effect, work-related MSDs are impairments of bodily structures such as muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, nerves, bones and the localised blood circulation system, that are caused or aggravated primarily by work and by the effects of the immediate environment in which work is carried out.

Most work-related MSDs are cumulative disorders, resulting from repeated exposure to high or low intensity loads over a long period of time. However, MSDs can also be acute traumas, such as fractures, that occur during an accident.

These disorders mainly affect the back, neck, shoulders and upper limbs, but can also affect the lower limbs. Some MSDs, such as carpal tunnel syndrome in the wrist, are specific because of their well-defined signs and symptoms. Others are nonspecific because only pain or discomfort exists without evidence of a clear specific disorder.

MSDs are a cause of concern not only because of the health effects on individual workers, but also because of the economic impact on businesses and the social costs to European countries. Tackling MSDs means taking action in the workplace. First, there are preventive steps that can be taken. Nevertheless, for those workers who already have MSDs, the challenge is to maintain their employability, keep them working and, if necessary, reintegrate them into the workplace.

In a bid to raise awareness about MSDs, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and the Senior Labour Inspectorate Committee launched adjacent campaigns specifically targeting these risks and produced a variety of information and promotional material.

The material is available free of charge from the offices of the Occupational Health and Safety Authority at 17 Edgar Ferro Street, Pieta'. For further information, one may contact the OHSA on 21247677 or email: [ohsa.communications@gov.mt](mailto:ohsa.communications@gov.mt)

**Material Available:**

- Guidance:**
- Information for employers and workers of the retail trade sector
  - Information for employers and workers of the construction sector
  - The prevention of lower back disorders in the healthcare sector

- Information sheets:**
- Introduction to work-related musculoskeletal disorders
  - Work-related neck and upper limb disorders
  - Hazards and risks associated with manual handling of loads in the workplace
  - Work-related musculoskeletal disorders: Prevention Report Summary

**Magazine:** Lighten the Load

**DVD:** Napo in Lighten the Load