

## Production Line Work

Production line work covers a multitude of industries such as food processing, car manufacturing and electronic components.

### **RSI/Upper Limb Disorders**

One of the most prevalent occupational diseases for women working on production lines is RSI/upper limb disorders, which can be extremely painful. Fast paced repetitive work - such as packaging goods, poultry processing and automotive production line work - presents a real risk of injury. The T&G have been successful in winning compensation for women members working in the poultry industry who suffered from RSI. However, as many of these workers will tell you, prevention is better than any amount of compensation.

### **Stress**

Lack of control over their work does present real problems for factory workers and can cause stress – as was highlighted in the legal decision *Hatton* in 2002. This is compounded by the present general job insecurity in the manufacturing sector.

### **Working Hours and Pregnant Workers**

Production line work often means working shifts, which can be a health risk for pregnant workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 the employer must carry out a risk assessment for pregnant workers. Under s.67 of the Employment Rights Act the worker has a right to be offered alternative work. However women workers must not be put in a position where they have to choose between health and income.

See next page for **Hazards & Production Line Work** and **Action Checklist**

### **Some Relevant Law**

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999  
The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992  
The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002  
The Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992  
The Noise at Work Regulations 1989.

### **Some Further Reading**

**T & G leaflet:** Do you suffer from aches and pains in silence?

**TUC leaflet:** Tackle the Hassle. What safety reps can do to manage the risks of stress at work

**HSE Booklet:** Upper Limb disorders in the Workplace HSG60(rev) £9.50

**HSE leaflet:** Preventing Dermatitis at Work INDG233 – free

**HSE leaflet:** aching Arms (or RSI) in Small Businesses INDG171 (rev1) Free

**HSE leaflet:** Getting to grips with manual handling INDG143 (rev1) – free

**HSE leaflet:** Back in Work. Managing back pain in the workplace INDG333

**HSE leaflet:** Work-related stress. A short guide. INDG281rev1 – free

**HSE leaflet:** Tackling work-related stress. A guide for employees INDG341

**HSE leaflet:** Preventing slips, trips and falls at work INDG 225 free

RSI Hazards Handbook - London Hazards Centre, Hampstead Town Hall Centre, 213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP 0207 794 5999 £4.50

## **Hazards of Production Line Work**

- Repetitive work causing RSI/upper limb disorders.
- Standing at production lines all day or being sat in awkward positions can cause back and other musculoskeletal injuries.
- Bullying from supervisors
- Extreme temperatures, especially in food processing environments.
- Noise from machinery
- Chemicals and Food products which could produce allergic skin reactions or asthma.
- Stress due to lack of control of work load, monotony of work or job insecurity.
- Moving parts of machinery can cause injuries to fingers or limbs
- Wet floors can be a slipping hazard - especially in the food processing industry
- Heavy lifting can present a risk of back injuries.
- Difficulties in accessing the toilet whilst working on a production line can lead to bladder infections and possible kidney damage.

## **Action Checklist**

- 1.** Have risk assessments been carried out?
- 2.** Have all repetitive work activities been assessed and measures taken to reduce the risk of RSI?
- 3.** Are measures taken to reduce worker's exposure to extremes of temperature?
- 4.** Have noise assessments been carried out?
- 5.** Have COSHH assessments been carried out?
- 6.** Are there Stress and Bullying policies?
- 7.** Are machines regularly inspected and maintained and dangerous moving parts guarded?
- 8.** Have manual handling assessments been carried out?
- 9.** Have systems been put in place to avoid slipping hazards?
- 10.** Have workers been trained in safe lifting techniques?
- 11.** Are workers given adequate rest breaks (particularly if they work in very hot or cold environments)?
- 12.** Are workers given time to access toilet facilities as and when needed?

## **Pregnancy Hazards:**

Heavy repetitive work, exposure to chemicals, prolonged standing, cramped sitting positions, lack of toilet breaks, stress, shiftwork and long working hours.