

Stearns and Lehman, dba Kerry Foods, Mansfield



Intervention Key words: Power-assisted pallet jack

Industry: Bottling

Risk factor(s): Awkward posture – back deviations; manual handling – pushing/pulling; awkward posture – shoulder deviations

Situation: Stearns and Lehman bottles beverage flavoring for the retail market. Manually operated pallet jacks move finished goods from the production area into the warehouse. The skids weigh 1,500 to 2,500 pounds and take 37 to 96 pounds of force to push and pull. Employees move finished skids every 10 to 30 minutes. See the photo to the left. At times, two employees work together to move the heavier skids.

Solution: Stearns and Lehman purchased three power-assisted pallet jacks. No force is now required to move the skids. Three skids cost \$12,500.

Results

- The incident rate (standardized for 200,000 hours worked) decreased from 3.1 the two years prior to the intervention to 1 the two years following, a 68-percent improvement.
- The National Safety Council reports the average cost of a workers' compensation claim is \$19,382. The company's return on investment was 1.3 years.
- Moving the skids take less time with the power-assisted pallet jacks. Moving skids no longer requires two employees.