European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development

Sub-sectoral Environmental and Social Guidelines: DIY Stores

PROCESS DESCRIPTION

Do-It-Yourself (DIY) stores range in size and type from independent hardware stores and builders merchants to large warehouse style operations situated on retail parks. The warehouse style of DIY store is characterised by high-level racking and narrow gangways designed to allow access by forklift trucks and side loaders with little room to spare.

DIY stores sell a wide range of materials and equipment for home improvement, decoration, gardening and furniture (particularly garden furniture). In some countries, some of the larger supermarkets may also sell a significant quantity of DIY products.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK/LIABILITY ISSUES

Solid Waste

Typically, the majority of DIY store waste is from:

- Products damaged in transit or in store;
- Packaging waste from deliveries;
- Returned products.

Methods to reduce the amount of waste, such as reuse and recycling should be considered. For example, good quality redundant but serviceable equipment can be reduced for sale to customers and staff or donated to charity.

Packaging

Packaging is used to preserve and protect the retail products from damage during transport but also to market the product. Much of this packaging can be recycled or composted. DIY stores should work with their suppliers to reduce the amount of packaging wherever possible, e.g. using reusable plastic crates rather than cardboard for deliveries and reducing over packaging of products to enable easy recycling of any remaining packaging.

Companies operating with the European Union (either as a manufacturer or as a supplier into European Union countries) will be subject to the European Union Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (94/62/EC), which aims to reduce the amount of packing that is being introduced into waste streams.

Hazardous Substances

- DIY stores may stock significant quantities of highly flammable, explosive or toxic materials, such as oils, gas cylinders, timber, paints, solvents and pesticides. Large stores may be subject to local regulations implementing the requirements of the Seveso II Directive (96/82/EC) which aims to control the quantities of dangerous substances in order to prevent a major accident.

- Some stocks and some cleaning chemicals may be harmful and exposure through normal usage or spillages may cause respiratory problems, dermatitis or chemical burns.

Slips and Trips

Uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces and trailing cables may lead to accident or injury. Passageways, delivery areas and stairs should be kept clear, spills cleaned up immediately and warning of wet surfaces clearly displayed.

Manual Handling and Repetitive Injury

Lifting and moving heavy, awkward or bulky items such as bags of cement and kitchen worktops can cause back injuries and muscle strain in both employees and customers. Employees should be trained in manual handling techniques and the weight of heavy items should be clearly indicated on the packaging and customer assistance provided if necessary.

A selection of different types of trolleys should be provided for customer use to enable them to select the most appropriate for their needs

Storage/Racking

Goods stacked incorrectly may fall onto staff and customers and overloaded shelving may collapse. People may also be tempted to climb on racking to reach goods and may fall and injure themselves. Safety ladders or mobile elevated platforms should be provided to enable staff to have safe access to goods on higher shelves. Training should be provided in their safe use.

Vehicle movements

- The movement of goods into, out of and around DIY stores involves the use of forklift trucks, trailers, delivery vehicles and customer cars, and accounts for a large proportion of accidents at these premises.

- During loading and unloading, accidents can occur if the driver's view is obstructed, the load shifts or falls from the vehicle or if the vehicle is unsuitable for the load.

Machinery and Equipment

Sharp tools and moving blades such as circular saws, planing and band sawing machines may be used to cut products to size. Persons using this equipment are at risk of serious injury (e.g. cuts and amputations) from coming into contact with moving blades and of receiving facial and eye injuries from stray pieces of wood etc.

The use of mechanical handling equipment such as fork lift trucks and cranes can lead to crushing and amputation injuries.

All equipment should have safety guarding and workers should be issued with appropriate personal protective equipment to protect against unavoidable sharp items and edges. Members of the public should be excluded from areas where such operations are conducted.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK/LIABILITY ISSUES

Energy

Energy is used within DIY stores primarily for heating, lighting, air-conditioning and to power equipment.

Energy usage has a direct correlation to the operating costs of the company and energy generation and consumption may be regulated or taxes/levies applied to reduce energy use and associated emissions of gases such as carbon dioxide.

Wastewater

Wastewater will arise from:

- Cleaning windows, internal floors, display surfaces, equipment etc;

- External cleaning of yard and parking areas;
- Watering plants and seedlings;
- Discharges from plant rooms, air conditioning and heating systems.

Discharges should pass to the foul sewer. A permit with specific discharge parameters from the regulatory authorities will normally be required.

Rainwater run-off from large car parks and other hard surfaced areas may give rise to pollution due to oil drips from cars, and the accumulation of dust and litter. This may require treatment prior to discharge, e.g. oil separators.

Spillages of liquid product, in particular paints and solvents, should be mopped up using spill kits and not permitted to enter the drainage system. The used materials may be classed as hazardous waste and therefore will be subject to national regulations on their safe disposal.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and Asbestos

- PCBs are a group of substances which are good electrical insulators. Typically, PCBs may be present as constituents of hydraulic oils or dielectric fluids in electrical switchgear, transformers and fluorescent light starters;
- Asbestos has been used on a large scale for many years as a fire proofing and insulation material and may be encountered in a wide range of forms including asbestos cement boards, as fire retardant gaskets in pipework and as fire retardant insulation around boilers and furnaces.

Particular attention should be given to buildings constructed before the 1980s.

Noise

Fork lift trucks and other machinery may give rise to hazardous noise levels causing hearing loss.

Dust

Dust can arise from cutting operations, spillage from packaged products and poor storage and movement of loose product, e.g. sand and gravel.

- Uncontrolled exposure to wood dust and formaldehyde (present in some medium density fibre board (MDF) products) may cause skin and eye irritation, respiratory disease and cancer,
- Cement dust is mildly corrosive. Short-term exposure will cause skin and eye irritation. Long-term exposure can cause inflammation of the cornea, skin dryness and dermatitis. If inhaled cement and stone dust can result in respiratory disease and asthma.
- Mineral wool dust arising from insulation products may cause temporary skin irritation and can exacerbate existing respiratory conditions.

KEY SOCIAL, LABOUR AND COMMUNITY RISK/LIABILITY ISSUES

Supply Chain

DIY stores are in a strong position to control the impact of their products on the environment through their supply chain, e.g. by specifying which chemicals cannot be used in their

products, by requiring all wood and wood products to be sourced from sustainable forestry, and reducing peat used in gardening products.

Consumer Environmental Impact

The products sold at DIY Stores have the potential to damage the environment from the manufacturing stages, in use and at disposal.

DIY stores can reduce the impact of the product after sale by providing:

- Alternative, less environmentally damaging products;
- Materials and equipment for energy and water conservation;
- Materials and equipment for renewable energy generation;
- Information on energy and water conservation;
- Reduced packaging;
- Information on correct cleaning and disposal of products after use.

OTHER SOCIAL, LABOUR AND COMMUNITY RISK/LIABILITY ISSUES

Transport

Delivery vehicles and customer cars may cause traffic congestion or excessive noise particularly at holiday periods which are peak times for consumers to undertake DIY projects.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Faulty or inaccurately labelled products may be a safety risk and potentially form an environmental hazard. Such an incident could have significant financial implications on a viable business. Financial impacts may arise from compensation claims, loss of reputation, loss of contracts and in terms of export markets;
- Where large quantities of energy are used then this can result in high operating costs to the business;
- Injuries may lead to increased payroll costs to replace workers;
- Fines, penalties and third party claims may be incurred for non-compliance with environment, health and safety regulations.

IMPROVEMENTS

Environment, Health and Safety Improvements

- Work with the supply chain to reduce packaging waste, e.g.
  - Use of reusable containers for deliveries;
  - Removal of unnecessary packaging layers;
  - Use of thinner packaging;
  - Use of recyclable or biodegradable packaging;
- Minimise stocking of hazardous substances by use of just-in-time inventory monitoring and control;

- Explore alternatives for reuse and recycling of unsold/unsaleable goods, e.g. charity donation;
- Train workers to correctly segregate and dispose of waste;
- Implement procedures to ensure solid and liquid waste is removed from surface areas before rinsing and washing, e.g. using scrapers, brooms and vacuum cleaners;
- Good housekeeping should be maintained at all times;
- Regular inspection should be carried out of all bulk containment facilities on site;
- Implement waste management systems which are safe, hygienic, secure from scavenging and minimise manual handling;
- Work with suppliers to substitute chemical ingredients where there are recognised environmental or health and safety issues, with lower risk alternatives;
- Offer customers alternative products where the issues surrounding a chemical ingredient are significant and controversial, but unresolved;
- Discontinue products, where research indicates that they pose significant risks to customers, staff and the environment;
- Monitor source of timber and timber based products, ensure that these are sourced from certified sustainable forestry resources.
- Provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) that is fit for the task to prevent injury and maintain hygiene standards. Staff should be trained in the correct selection, use and maintenance of PPE; the training should include the reasons for its use and the dangers of not using it. PPE should be inspected regularly and maintained or replaced as necessary;
- Redesign of manual processes to avoid heavy lifting/repetitive activities. Install mechanical lifting aids where possible;
- Train staff in proper lifting techniques and safe use of machinery;
- Devise a safe system of movement for arrival, reception, unloading, loading and movement within the site (e.g. one-way systems, designated parking and pedestrian areas, restricted access to dangerous areas). Provide clear information and signage on these procedures to drivers and public;
- Separate delivery areas from those areas accessible to the general public;
- Train staff in correct loading and use of vehicles, e.g. forklifts;
- Mark equipment and racking with safe loading limits. Stack goods with heaviest at the bottom where possible. Provide safety ladders or platforms and train staff in their use to reach higher shelves;
- Minimise access to areas being cleaned or where spillages have occurred and provide warning signs to customers. Spills should be cleaned up immediately and the floor should be dried as much as possible;
- Provide supplementary matting in entrance areas during wet weather;

- Limit time spent by employees in noisy environments by task rotation.

Social, Labour and Community Improvements

- Provide information to consumers on the environmental impacts and health effects of products to enable them to make informed choices and to ensure correct use and disposal;
- Provide information to customers via product labelling on any necessary PPE required for product use.
- Consider sourcing timber products only from certified sustainable sources.

GUIDE TO INITIAL DUE DILIGENCE SITE VISITS

During the initial site visit, the issues will vary according to the size of operation and the level of environment, health and safety management already introduced. While visiting the site it is important to discuss and review the following:

- Confirm organisational responsibilities and systems for environment, health and safety;
- Check whether company has procedures for ensuring origin of timber and for working with suppliers to eliminate/limit hazardous chemicals used in their products;
- Check the condition of storage facilities for chemicals;
- What is the standard of "housekeeping" on site? Do areas look clean and tidy? Look for evidence that the walking and working surfaces are kept clean and dry;
- Check whether staff are wearing PPE?
- Check signage around the site:
  - Does it convey the health and safety risks?
  - Are fire exits clearly marked?
  - Are there separate routes for pedestrians and vehicles painted on floor in car parks and delivery areas?
- Is fire fighting and first aid equipment available?
- Check the age and condition of equipment, look for signs of wear and tear, degradation, leaks and breaks;
- Check that waste storage areas are clean of debris and that are skips covered to prevent waste escaping, for example, check that waste containers have lids or are stored in an area with a roof;
- Does the organisation have insurance in place to cover the sale of faulty or dangerous products? Have there been any recent product recall incidents?
- Have the premises been inspected recently (within the past 2 years) by the regulatory authorities for health, safety and the environment?
- Have there been any recent (within the last three years) incidents on site such as serious injuries, fires/explosions, spills? Is there insurance in place to cover such incidents?

- Is the facility subject to any audits by consumer organisations? What was the outcome of these audits?

- Does the business plan have line items for Environment, Health and Safety improvements?

- Check the conditions and duration of validity for all permits.

Social, Labour and Community

- Check that labour standards, contracting and remuneration are in line with national law and are consistent with the average for the sector;

- Check that hours worked, including overtime, are recorded and staff should receive written details of hours worked and payment received;

- Check that wages and working hours are consistent with the average for the sector and national standards;

- Has the Company received inspections from the local labour inspectorate in the previous three years? Have these resulted in any penalties, fines, major recommendations or corrective action plans?

- Does the organisation have a grievance mechanism which allows employees to raise workplace concerns?

- Are employees free to form, or join, a worker's organisation of their choosing?

- Consider installing product traceability systems that facilitate tracing and recall of products once released for sale.

- Does the organisation have insurance in place to cover the recall of contaminated products? Have there been any recent product recall incidents? What other insurances does the company have in place?

Take note/ask questions relating to any activities that address the improvements listed in the Improvements section of this document.

ACTION PLANS

Dependent on the individual business, select appropriate improvements from the list above to include in the action plan. As a minimum, any business should be required to have the following in place:

- Operational procedures to manage environmental, health and safety risks;

- Monitoring programmes;

- Improvement objectives, targets and project plans;

- Training for personnel;

- Regular inspections, checks and audits with records to demonstrate achievement of the required level of performance against legal requirements and improvement action;

- Emergency plans for environment, health and safety accidents;

- Management review/demonstrated involvement in environment, health and safety management.

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