



SHIPPING CONTAINER SAFETY

On 28 March 2023 SafeWorkNSW reported that a 62-year-old worker was fatally injured after being crushed by windows while unloading them from a shipping container at Glenwood. This terrible accident is a reminder for us all that the unpacking shipping containers can be hazardous, particularly when unpacking heavy, awkward and unsecured items or handling sheet materials such as glass, cases, aluminium, frames or timber.

Workers are at risk of being crushed by materials and falling objects as well as being hit by the plant and machinery used in unpacking.

SafeWork and AGWA recommend the following when handling glass and windows in shipping containers:

- Order within unloading capabilities.
- Ensure containers are unloaded on level ground.
- Unload using mechanical devices rated to lift the required load.
- Use appropriate restraints during unloading to ensure stability of remaining load (photo 1 and 2).
- Do not manually unpack crates in containers (photo 3).



SafeWork recommends the following when unpacking shipping containers:

Consider reasonably practicable control measures to manage the risks associated with unpacking shipping containers. **A risk assessment must be undertaken before unloading is commenced.** This can be a documented company procedure or a simple visual inspection to confirm the load is safe. Ensure that:

- items are packed into the container in order of removal to eliminate sorting the items inside the container.
- extra care is taken when unpacking items such as windows, glass sheets, cases, aluminium frames, and composite slabs. You can do this by:
 - strapping items to an 'A' frame or to the side of the container. Securing each sheet using a separate strap means workers can only release the item that is being removed – one at a time.



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- using mechanical aids to eliminate the need to manually handle goods.
- ensuring individual items are secured as you unpack.
- unpacking only in a designated area.
- ensuring the load is secured in its final destination.



- the area around the container is clear of obstructions.
- there is an appropriate traffic management plan in place.
- if manual unpacking is necessary workers are trained in the safest system of work to unload the container
- personal protective equipment is used such as gloves, hard hats, safety glasses, and hi-visibility clothing.

IMPORTANT SAFETY REMINDER

Ensure you conduct regular risk assessments and create guidelines to follow when unpacking shipping containers. Communicate your safety requirements for shipping containers with your suppliers (especially overseas suppliers).

SafeWork and AGWA have the following guidance material for shipping container safety

[Guide for unpacking shipping containers – SafeWorkNSW](#)

[Unpacking Shipping Containers checklist – SafeWorkNSW](#)

[Unpacking shipping containers – Video Safety alert](#)

[Handling Glass Safety - AGWA](#)

Adapted for AGWA members from SafeWork NSW material May 2023