

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION TO ENGAGE  
IN UNSAFE WORK PRACTICES: AN AIR FREIGHT  
CASE STUDY**

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**Background** The air freight work environment contains hazards that constantly need to be monitored and mitigated by safe work practices. As well as the risks posed by manual handling tasks, workers operate heavy machinery and work around jet engines in a high traffic environment. However, little is known about the factors that influence worker decision making and behaviour in this context.

**Aims/Objectives/Purpose** This study aimed to identify factors that influence the decision to engage in risky behaviours that might result in an accident or injury.

**Methods** The study was conducted at an Australian air freight company. Three activities were examined: loading planes, moving freight and using forklifts. In phase 1, workers were observed performing these activities as part of their normal duties and 36 Critical Decision Making interviews were conducted. In phase 2, management-level staff were asked to comment on the factors identified during phase 1.

**Results/Outcome** Factors influencing worker decision making were identified across multiple levels including: equipment, surroundings, other workers, technical and operational management, company management and airport management. Multiple interactions between these factors were also uncovered.

**Significance/Contribution to the Field** Understanding the factors that influence the decision to engage in risky behaviours in air freight workplaces will aid in the design of appropriate, informed, safety interventions and industry reforms in order to prevent injuries and accidents.