

TOP STACKING UPDATE

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

GMB has begun formal discussions with Asda on the practice of top stacking (aka top stocking), following numerous, repeated complaints from our members on the issue.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

GMB members are reporting that top stacking is causing bad backs, neck pain, and sore ankles, knees, shoulders and wrists. This is because they are often asked to place heavy and bulky items on the top shelf of the racking.

The steps provided to do this are not adjustable, and therefore won't suit everyone who is expected to do top stacking. The same set of steps will be used by someone who is 5ft and a colleague who is 6ft. This means that some GMB members are overstretching, straining to carry heavy weights, and potentially hurting themselves when they do the top stacking.

HOW HAS THIS HAPPENED?

Asda introduced top stacking to reduce the amount of space needed in store for warehousing. In theory, this should be a good thing, as it means there is less need to use the fork lift trucks which can cause serious injury.

However, the move to top stacking was introduced without discussion and agreement from GMB. This meant that the views and concerns of the people working in the stores, who would be doing the top stacking, were never taken into consideration. Because of this, the steps bought for the top stacking trial were never discussed with GMB, so we could not make suggestions for improvements.



WHAT IS GMB DOING?

In May, we invited Senior Asda H&S Managers Paul Gallemore and Stuart Wiggins to attend the national Asda Stores Shop Stewards meeting at Wortley Hall, to hear our concerns first hand.

From there, we met with Asda in York to look at the issues in more detail on the shop floor. During the meeting, we identified that at least three different types of steps are being used for top stacking, and that the newest steps are an improvement on previous versions.

We also identified that some products, such as some spirits, multipack soft drinks, and multipack cereals, are too heavy to be easily placed on the top shelf.

A particular issue was the lip on the top shelf, which makes it difficult to slide products straight onto the shelf. We discussed taking the lip off the shelves, but this makes it easier for things to fall onto the customers, so it may not be possible in the long run.



WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

We have agreed to put a joint working group together to identify the key problems and look at how we can fix them. The group will include shop stewards, GMB members who are doing top stacking everyday, and the GMB's health and safety expert.

There are really two options that could be taken forward. One is to redesign the steps so that they can be easily adjusted. This will not be simple to do, as the steps have to be strong enough to withstand being hit by full trolleys, but not so wide that the block the aisle for customers.

The other option is to provide several different size and height steps at every store, to make it easier for shorter and taller colleagues to do the top stacking.

One of the most important things the working group will need is information on what the problems are, and ideas on how we can fix them. This is not something that can simply be sorted out overnight, and we want to make sure we get it right.

WHAT CAN GMB MEMBERS IN ASDA DO?

We need as much information as possible from you on the specific problems that you have with the top stacking steps, along with any ideas you have for improvements. Please e-mail your comments to topstacking@gmb.org.uk

One of the biggest reasons why you weren't consulted about top stacking is because GMB doesn't have a Health and Safety Representative in every Asda store. Being a health and safety rep is a great way to help make real improvements in your workplace, and helps to give GMB a strong presence. Full training is provided in your GMB Region, and workplace Health and Safety Reps have the most powerful set of rights of any trade union steward, giving you legal protection for your role. If you are interested in getting involved, speak to your Regional Organiser or Branch Secretary for more details, or see the GMB website at

www.gmb.org.uk/work_issues/health_safety__environment.aspx

Top stacking is not going to be a simple issue to resolve, but it is one that we can win. If we can sign up more members in each Asda store, we will have more power in negotiating with managers. Non-GMB will also benefit from improvements in top stacking equipment, but only GMB can deliver changes and argue on their behalf. So encourage non-members to join and have their say on this important issue.

This is just one hazard that GMB members have flagged up. If you know of another one tell GMB straight away.

GMB members support their colleagues campaign for union rights in Walmart across the world.

Walmart workers in the USA have started an organisation called OUR Walmart which GMB supports.

To find out more about their campaign go to visit www.forrespect.org or on Facebook.com/OURWMT

OURWalmart 
Organization United for Respect at Walmart



YOUR HOLIDAY PAY?

Earlier this year GMB surveyed our ASDA Colleagues and GMB Stewards, to see if they were receiving Holiday Pay, based on an average of the hours they actually worked, or whether they were receiving holiday pay on their contracted hours only.

GMB was staggered at the response. Nearly everyone gave solid examples that their holiday pay may have been incorrect.

Your Asda retail colleague handbook says.

“Your rate of holiday pay may increase or decrease throughout the holiday year depending on premium hours worked by you and your contractual basic hourly rate during the 12 weeks prior to your holiday. Your holiday rate will never be less than your contractual rate of pay. If you are in receipt of a weekly ‘Top Rate supplement’ this will be reflected in your holiday pay.”

This means that the pay you get while on holiday must be what your average actual pay was over the 12 weeks just before your holiday started.

This is how your holiday pay should be calculated. If you are contracted to work 16 hours a week, but actually work, on average 20 hours per week your holiday pay should be calculated on 20 hours, not 16 hours. So the number of hours you actually work and not the number of hours you are contracted to work. Some may be frightened to raise this issue with their Asda manager or



supervisor. Tell your GMB Workplace Organiser and sit down with them with your pay slips and do the very simple calculation. If you both agree that you have been under paid, write to your Asda manager asking that the matter be rectified urgently and your money paid to you. Keep a copy of your letter and any further correspondence for your records.

As a result, GMB has held meetings with Asda to resolve this. GMB has agreed with Asda to do a thorough, joint survey of everyone working in the stores to see how big this problem is. GMB has also asked the straight question with the company “what is your interpretation of the clause in the colleague handbook” and we await a response.

ONLY GMB MEMBERS HAVE A SAY

Join at www.gmb.org.uk/join or fill in the freepost form on the back

ASDA@GMB CONGRESS 2012

GMB National Officers and senior Asda executives signed the first ever national agreement covering GMB members working in Asda distribution at GMB Congress in June this year. Asda also had a stand in the exhibition hall where many companies and member services were on display. The Asda stand proudly showed the green credentials being developed by the company. GMB hope Asda will be at Congress every year now as part of the developing relationship between GMB and the company.

If you are interested in going to GMB Congress in Plymouth in June 2013, tell your local GMB officer and put your name forward for election as a delegate. Find out more at www.gmb.org.uk/GMBCongress

STOP PRESS

GMB have raised our members concerns with ASDA about delivery and un-loading procedures at ex NETTO stores and secured agreement by the company to invest in better safety procedures and equipment.

For more information, contact your local GMB Organiser. Details in the Contact Us panel overleaf.

HOW DO I JOIN? JOIN ONLINE AT WWW.GMB.ORG.UK/JOIN

Or just fill in parts 1, 2, 3 or 4 in the form below. Hand the form to your local GMB Workplace Organiser or post it to: Freepost RSTL-ULCH-JBET, GMB, 22 Stephenson Way, LONDON NW1 2HD (you do not need a stamp). Tel: 020 7391 6700. If you have any questions contact your local GMB office, email info@gmb.org.uk or visit www.gmb.org.uk

CONTACT US LOCAL GMB OFFICES

GMB Birmingham & West Midlands Region
David Day on 07957 251927

GMB London Region
Shaun Graham 07885 706556

GMB Midlands & East Coast Region
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GMB Wales & South West Region
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GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region
Lynn Brook 07958 053286

FOR UNION USE ONLY Section Branch No Membership No Date of joining

GMB membership application form PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

1 TELL US ABOUT YOU

Surname First name Title Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr Date of birth

Home address Home Tel Email

Postcode Mobile I agree to abide by GMB rules Signature

Date We ask for your ethnic origins as part of our equal opportunities policy of improving services to all members
Bangladeshi Black African Black Caribbean Black British Chinese Indian Irish Pakistani White Other:

2 TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOB

Employer Your job

Address where you work Postcode

How many hours a week do you work? Pay No

Work Tel Pay Date

3 CHOOSE EITHER AUTHORISATION OF DEDUCTION OF YOUR TRADE UNION CONTRIBUTIONS FROM YOUR PAY

Section 68, Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidated) Act 1992 as amended

I authorise my employer to deduct from my pay each week/month the sum of £ or other amounts as may be fixed by the GMB from time to time.

- Please start the deductions immediately and pay the amounts to the GMB. Cash
- I note that this agreement may be cancelled by one month's notice in writing.
- I give permission to my employer to notify the GMB of any future change of address.

Signed Date

4 OR INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT



Please fill in the form and send to Freepost RSTL-ULCH-JBET, GMB, 22 Stephenson Way, LONDON NW1 2HD

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society branch

To the Manager of Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Bank/Building Society Account Number

Bank/Building Society Sort Code

Reference number (Office use only)

Service User Number

For GMB official use only. This is not part of the instruction to your Bank/Building Society. If your A/C number is not available fill in your address below.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.
Please pay GMB Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with GMB and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks or Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account