

Occupational safety and health hazards associated with the slaughtering and meat processing industry in urban areas of Zimbabwe: A case study of the Gweru city Municipal Abattoir

Steven Jerie and Kennedy Matunhira

Abstract

This study examined occupational safety and health hazards associated with the slaughtering and meat processing industry in the Gweru City Municipal abattoir in Zimbabwe. Qualitative and quantitative research designs were employed. The study population involved all the 23 workers including flayers and labourers who are directly involved in slaughtering and meat processing. Data was collected with questionnaire administration, interviews and field observations. Safety and health hazards associated with slaughtering and meat processing at the abattoir included physical, biological, ergonomic, mechanical, environmental and food safety hazards, all with the risk of causing significant harm to the workers. The lack of experience on job operations was one of the key risk factors increasing the likelihood of workers getting injured and increased frequency of injuries. Workers who had more working years at the abattoir encountered injuries less frequently than those who had fewer working years. The abattoir's occupational safety and health management system was not effective in solving safety and health risks and required improvement. One effective way that can be implemented is to establish a stand-alone safety, health and environment department within the Gweru City Council to give priority to occupational safety and health issues. Training programmes for workers and management on safety and health are recommended to improve workers' skills on job tasks, hazard identification, and risk assessment and to improve workers' behaviour as well as to enhance awareness on safety and health among management, which ultimately improves management commitments.