

Cupboard Collapse

Lessons Learnt Summary

Incident Description

A row of four eye-level cupboards (each measuring 1900mm x 530mm x 330mm) fell off the wall of the Hospitality Kitchen in Mid City Place. One member of staff was struck on the head resulting in cuts to his forehead, nose and chin which has kept him away from work for more than 7 days making it a RIDDOR reportable incident. Another member of staff was struck on the arm resulting in grazing and bruising.

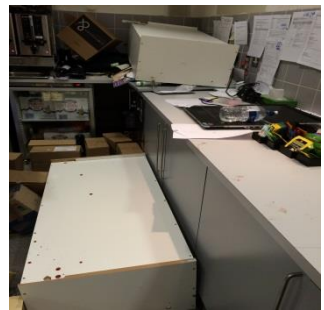
Photographs



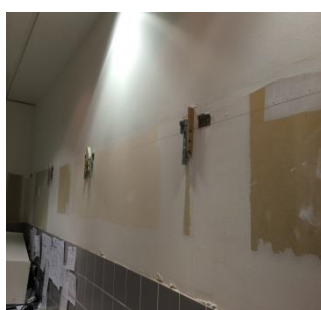
Cupboard which fell and struck staff



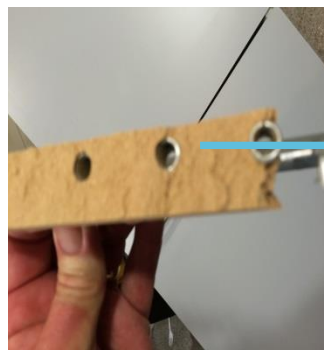
Crockery stored in end cupboard



Other cupboards which fell



Brackets remained on wall



Side of carcass failed at fixing point



Point where side of carcass failed

What went wrong

The door to one of the cupboards was opened, when the cupboard started to fall away from the wall. The rest of the cupboards progressively came away from the wall because they were screwed together.

The bracket fixings were ripped out from the sides of the cupboards, leaving the wall fixings in place. The sides of the cupboards are made from MDF and chipboard. The fixing brackets were attached to the upper section of the side panels of the cupboard.

A combination of excessive weights being placed in these cupboards over time and the design of the fixings onto the side panel of the carcass resulted in this incident.

Lessons learnt

To ensure cupboards in our premises are fit for purpose, are not overloaded, and that the fixings are sound:

- 1) Cupboards need to be of suitable construction based on the environment and the loadings they will be subject to, and be installed by competent persons. Cupboards in dedicated catering kitchens should be made from stainless steel. Cupboards made from medium-density fibreboard (MDF) should only be used for storing light items.
- 2) The storage of items in eye-level cupboards must be managed to prevent them from being overloaded. Heavy items should be stored in low level cupboards. Where overloading is suspected - reduce the overall weight supported by the cabinet by removing heavier contents. FM Managers and Location Managers shall make regular checks of eye-level cupboards during their office inspections.
- 3) The brackets and fixings used for securing cupboards to walls must be suitable for the weight of the cupboards and contents, and take account of the materials the cupboards and walls are made of. If there is any doubt about the integrity of current fixings – they should be checked by a competent person. Fixings can be strengthened by installing internal battens to the carcass and install additional fixings to the wall through these.

When was the last time you checked your cupboards at home to ensure they are not overloaded?