



Manual Handling Procedure

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To ensure the health, safety and well-being of workers by ensuring that causes of manual handling injury in workplaces are identified and controlled.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior management must ensure that all tasks involving manual handling are assessed, and that measures to reduce the risk of injury due to manual handling are implemented.

Line management must ensure that manual handling risk control measures are carried out in workplaces under their control, and that safe manual handling practices are followed.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. MANUAL HANDLING

Manual handling covers a wide range of activities, including the use of force in –

- lifting
- pulling
- pushing
- holding
- carrying, and
- throwing.

2. INJURIES RESULTING FROM MANUAL HANDLING

Unsafe manual handling can result in the following musculoskeletal injuries –

- muscle sprains and strains
- injuries to the back, such as injuries to muscles, ligaments, intervertebral discs and other structures in the back, and
- injuries to soft tissues such as nerves, ligaments and tendons in the wrists, arms, shoulders, neck or legs
- abdominal hernias.

3. CAUSES OF MANUAL HANDLING INJURIES

Injuries caused by over-exertion can result from simple tasks such as –

- lifting, pulling, pushing or holding loads
- working in a fixed position with the back bent, sitting or standing continuously, standing with most of the body weight on one leg for extended periods, or driving vehicles for long periods
- repetitive tasks such as reaching to lift or lower objects, or to grip tools continuously
- working in awkward positions involving bending or twisting the body to reach items, and
- using vibrating tools continuously.



4. IDENTIFICATION OF HAZARDOUS TASKS

All tasks should be examined to see if any of the following factors are present in the task –

- repetitive or sustained application of force
- repetitive or sustained awkward posture
- repetitive or sustained movement
- application of high forces
- exposure to sustained vibration
- manual handling of persons or live animals, or
- manual handling of loads that are unstable, unbalanced or difficult to hold.

If any of these factors are detected, the task must be assessed to determine the degree of risk that workers are exposed to. In assessing risk, the cumulative effects of overexertion in causing musculoskeletal injury must be taken into account as well as the risk of immediate injury from the overexertion.

There is no specified maximum weight that a person may lift. In assessing whether a lift could be harmful to a person, all factors that could make the task hazardous must be identified and their impact assessed.

5. ASSESSMENT OF RISKS

Assessment of risks should be carried out in consultation with workers and their representatives, as they will be more aware of the difficulties involved in the tasks that they carry out. Injury records may also assist in identifying high-risk activities. The following risk factors should be examined -

- the postures, movements and forces involved in the task
- the duration and frequency of the task, and
- environmental factors (such as heat, cold, vibration) that act directly on the person carrying out the task.

6. CONTROL OF RISK

(a) Eliminate or reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury

- alter the workplace or the environment conditions where the manual handling task is carried out
- alter the system of work used to carry out the manual handling task
- use mechanical aids.

(b) Use information, training or instruction

If none of the controls listed above are practicable, information, training and instruction in safe manual handling techniques can be applied to reduce the risk.

Reliance solely on the use of instruction, information and training should not be used as a manual handling risk control measure as the risk still exists in its original form, and any lapse on the part of a person carrying out a task will expose them to the full risk of injury, and an employer to the risk of prosecution due to failure to control identified risks in the workplace.

7. MONITORING

Because of the human factors involved in manual handling, constant monitoring must be carried out of tasks and workers as long as a manual handling risk exists. New workers, or



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workers new to a task, are at a greater risk than those who have been performing a task for some time due to their unfamiliarity with the vagaries and nuances that may manifest in the course of the task.

Elimination of causes is the only real solution to the risk of manual handling injury. Monitoring of tasks will assist in the identification of causes of possible injury, and allow effective countermeasures to be developed and implemented.