



# Safe Manual Handling

## INTRODUCTION

### LEGISLATION

More than a 1/3 of injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive are from incidents involving manual handling procedures. These injuries are costly to the employee and the employer. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (Amended 2002) apply to any process where manual handling occurs. It offers a framework to help reduce the number of accidents and injuries from these procedures.



### TYPES OF INJURY

The back is a series of bones with a disk separating each vertebra. There are ligaments and muscles, which support the spine. Pain is a protective mechanism to warn you about potential harm to your body.

The types of injury that occur are:

1. Strains, both immediate and those that occur over time due to repeated movements.
2. Sprains, cuts and bruising, fractures and intra-vertebral disc injuries.

Anywhere in the musculo-skeletal system can be injured.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

The purpose of a risk assessment is to:

1. Identify hazardous practices by looking at the **Task, Individual, Load, and the Environment**. Also to decide who may be harmed by the process, to look at the existing controls and to decide if further interventions are necessary.

The person carrying out the assessment should be:

1. Familiar with The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (Amended 2002) and any amendments or updates.
2. Familiar with the processes being carried out.
3. Competent to carry out the task.



The assessment should be written down and the recommendations acted upon where reasonably practicable.

### LOAD

- Is it an awkward shape?
- Is it heavy?
- Can the load shift; is it unstable or predictable?
- Are there handholds or can the packaging be made to include handholds?
- Is team handling required?
- Is the load hazardous e.g. hot, cold, sharp or a chemical?

### TASK

The whole task should be looked at from the beginning to the end. Some of these aspects need to be considered:

- Is it manageable?
- Can the height of the lift be made more suitable?
- Can the lifting above the head or below the knees be avoided?
- Can twisting or repetitive movement be reduced?
- If repetitive movements are involved the weight of the load will need to be reduced.
- Does the operator need to hold the load away from their trunk, or need to push or pull?
- Can mechanical aids be used, e.g. trolleys, hoists, roller tracks or conveyers?

### ENVIRONMENT

- Is there enough space?
- Is it cold so that the touch sensation may be less?
- Is it very hot so that the hands may be sweaty and slip?
- Are there varying floor levels?
- Do different surfaces have to be crossed?
- Is the lighting suitable?
- Could something in the environment suddenly change e.g. a sudden gust of wind?

### INDIVIDUAL

- Are they fit and trained to carry out the task?
- Does it require unusual capability?
- Does personal protective equipment need to be used with the hazard, and does this affect the movement or grip of the operator?
- Is the load a hazard to particular people e.g. pregnant workers?

## EMPLOYERS & EMPLOYEES

### EMPLOYERS DUTIES

Employers should:

1. Assess the likely risk of injury with all manual handling operation occurring in the workplace.
2. Put in place a safe system of work.
3. Avoid the need for manual handling so far as reasonably practicable.
4. Reduce any remaining risk as far as reasonably practicable.
5. To provide information and training.
6. To re-assess any manual handling at regular intervals or, if anything in the risk assessment changes.



### EMPLOYEES DUTIES

Employees must:

1. Follow a safe system of work.
2. Make proper use of equipment provided by the employer for manual handling.
3. Attend any training that is provided.
4. Not put either themselves or others at risk.
5. Report any accidents or near misses in line with the local policy.

### PREVENTING BACK PAIN

As well as the processes above there are actions that you can take to help prevent back pain these are:

1. Keep your weight within normal limits for your height.
2. Try to maintain a good posture during all activities e.g. standing, sitting, and driving.
3. Stretch and warm up before activity.
4. Gentle stretching and exercise programmes can assist in building a strong back and a strong stomach to support it.
5. If you get back pain, stop the activity immediately and seek further advice from your medical practitioner. If the pain occurred during a work activity report the incident according to local policy.

## HANDLING TECHNIQUES

Think - PLAN

- Where am I going?
- What am I lifting?
- What are the options?
- Are there any aids available?
- Do I need help?
- Do I need to remove any obstructions?



Think - FEET

- Am I wearing suitable footwear for the task?
- Place your feet apart to give you a good balanced posture.
- Place the leading foot so it is positioned slightly forward in the direction of travel.

Think - POSTURE

- Keep the spine in its normal alignment.
- Bend from the knees but do not over flex them.
- Keep shoulders and knees in normal alignment.
- Keep the shoulders level.

Think - GRIP

- Ensure the grip is secure.
- Are there suitable handholds?
- Is the load likely to slip?
- Keep arms within the boundary of the body.

Think - LIFT

- Keep relaxed.
- The upward movement starts with the head.
- Make the movement as smooth and progressive as possible.
- Use the power of the legs.
- Keep the load close to the body.
- Keep the heaviest part towards you.
- If you need to turn, move the feet, don't twist the body.
- Put the load down then adjust it if necessary.