

Manual Handling

Introduction

This information sheet gives practical advice on managing the risks associated with manual handling of loads. There are two key requirements:

- ▶ Risk assess each manual handling task
- ▶ Put measures in place where needed to avoid or reduce the risks

What is manual handling?

Manual handling is a physical activity which takes place in every workplace. Manual handling can be a potential workplace hazard where the activity requires, for example, a person to handle very heavy loads or lift loads to an unsafe height.

This sheet gives practical information on useful changes that can be made to reduce the risk of injury caused by manual handling. It will show you how to review your current work activities and identify the potential issues in relation to manual handling. You can then introduce changes to work practices which will result in better ways of working and reduced risk of back injury.

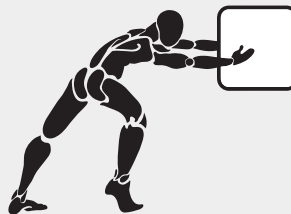
There are a number of stages involved:

- ▶ Look at the way the task is currently done
- ▶ Collect information on load weights and risk factors (see table below)
- ▶ Consult with the employees who actually carry out the task – record the issues they have noticed and any possible solutions they can think of
- ▶ List the issues that may need to be addressed
- ▶ Make changes to improve the job

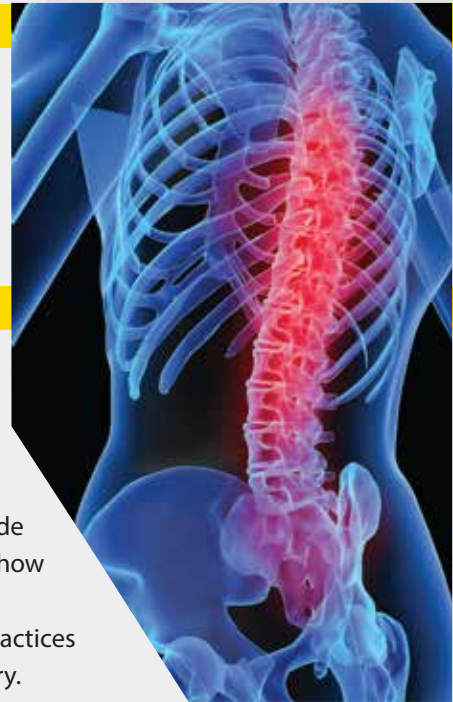
A manual handling task may include one or all of the following risk factors:

Risk Factors

The lifting of the load requires repeated handling at a distance from the trunk



The lifting of the load requires repeated bending of the trunk



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Risk Factors

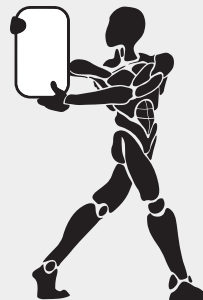
The load is very large and difficult to grasp



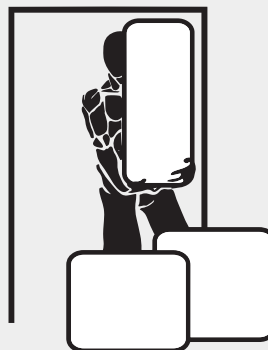
The handling repeatedly takes place at floor level or above shoulder height



The physical effort can only be achieved by a twisting of the trunk



The load is carried over a long distance and there is poor housekeeping, poor access or not enough space



Note:

This may help to flag the manual handling tasks that need priority risk assessment

Manual handling case study

Below is an example of how a work task which involves manual handling can be assessed and result in the development of a new system of work with less manual handling.

Figure 1 opposite shows a warehouse worker manually handling a large barrel. The worker hunches over and grips both sides of the barrel; slowly and with great effort and strain the worker tilts the barrel back slightly, and then forward using the weight of their body.



Figure 1

Following a risk assessment of this manual handling task a number of risk factors are identified. The physical effort is too strenuous – the barrel is difficult to grasp, being both too heavy and too large.

Figure 2 opposite illustrates these risk factors.



Figure 2

A new system of work is developed. In **Figure 3** opposite the worker now approaches the barrel, which is mounted, on a specialised trolley. A safety clip holds the barrel securely in place, and the worker can wheel the barrel on the trolley easily, thereby reducing the risk of injury.



Figure 3