

QUICK FACTS

About Hazardous Manual Tasks

A hazardous manual task is any activity involving lifting, lowering carrying, pushing, pulling, holding or restraining. It can also include stretching and bending, sustained and awkward postures and repetitive movements.

The most common manual handling injuries include sprains and strains, damage to muscles and tendons, and hernia problems.

Every year in New South Wales, approximately 17 000 people are seriously injured or suffer from illness related to manual handling.

Manual handling needs to be considered as part of the overall management of WHS in your workplace/ Safety is not a 'problem to be solved'. It should be part of the way employers and workers approach their work each and every day.

Legislation

Workplace health and safety laws set out the requirements of employees and employers in the workplace. For more information visit www.safework.nsw.gov.au

Basics of Good Lifting

Today, trolleys, forklifts, hoists, dollies and other types of lifting equipment are used to lift heavy objects. However, sometimes it is necessary to load or unload moderate to heavy objects by hand. When this is the case, knowing the proper ways to lift can save you a great deal of pain and misery from a sprained back.

MORE INFORMATION

How Can I Help?

Supervisors

- Ask yourself – are there any manual handling issues that can impact on the safety of your staff?
- Talk to your staff about safe manual handling

Staff

- Ask yourself – what jobs involve repetitive lifting, pushing or pulling?
- What can be done to reduce the risk?

Other Resources and Training

Training Courses (See PODS Website)

- Manual Handling and Back Care
- Safe Work Procedures
- Addressing Hazards and Risks in the Workplace

Resources

- WorkSafe Australia
- WHS Website

Further Questions?

Workplace Health and Safety Unit

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Hazardous Manual Tasks

The Safe Way

MAIN PROBLEM AND THE RIGHT WAY

Preventable hazardous manual task injuries occur too often and full recovery can take a long time to occur, if ever.

Reduce the Risk

There are three basic steps to risk management:

1. **Hazard Identification** - What could go wrong? A hazard which is not identified cannot be controlled/ Consult with the people performing the activity to identify the risks.
2. **Risk assessment** - the interaction of all risk factors should be considered including; what are the consequences of this incident occurring, what is the likelihood of the consequence identified occurring and what is the risk score?
3. **Risk control** - The primary aim of risk control is to eliminate the risk by removing the hazard, e.g. eliminate lifting and carrying task. If elimination of the risk is not practicable then other controls must be implemented to minimise the risk.
4. **Monitor and review**

The Right Way

Preparing to Lift:

- Assess the situation
- Size up the load
- Develop a plan
- Know your limits
- Be prepared to say No

Lifting the Load:

- Feet apart
- Semi-squad
- Straight back
- Brace stomach muscles
- Firm grip
- Lift with Legs

Carrying the Load:

- Keep load close
- Look ahead
- Maintain good posture
- Move smoothly
- Turn by moving feet

Putting Down the Load:

- Feet apart
- Straight back
- Brace stomach muscles
- Bend your knees
- Squad down slowly
- Put down Gently

SAFE MANUAL HANDLING CHECKLIST

Identify the Hazards

- Is there frequent or prolonged reaching where the hands pass below mid-thigh height or above the shoulder?
- Is there frequent or prolonged bending or twisting of the back due to extended reaching forwards?
- Are awkward postures assumed frequently or over prolonged periods, i.e. postures that are not forward facing and upright?
- Is manual handling performed frequently or for long time periods by the employee?
- Are loads moved or varied over long distances?
- Are large push/pulling or other forces involved?
- Is it difficult or unsafe to get grip of the load?
- Is the lighting inadequate for safe manual handling?
- Are the floors working surfaces cluttered, uneven, slippery or otherwise unsafe?
- Are there age-related factors, disabilities or other special factors that may affect task performance?

Assess the situation

- Can you lift this load safely, or is a two-person lift?
- How far will you have to carry the load?
- Is the path clear of clutter, cords, slippery areas, overhands, stairs, curbs or uneven surfaces?
- Will you encounter closed doors that need to be opened?
- Once the load is lifted, will it block your view?
- Can the load be broken down into smaller parts?
- Should you wear gloves to get a better grip and protect your hands?

Size up the load

- Test the weight by lifting one of the corners. If it too heavy or an awkward shape, stop.
- If there is any doubt, ask for help from fellow workers.
- Try to use a mechanical lift or a hand truck.
- Try to break the load down into smaller parts.

Use good lifting techniques

- Get close to the load. Centre yourself over the load and stand with your feet shoulder width apart.
- Tighten your stomach muscles. Tight abdominal muscles increase intra-abdominal pressure and will help to support your back
- Get a good handhold and pull the load close to you. The farther the load is from your body, the heavier it will feel.
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- Bend your knees. Bending your knees is the single most important thing you can do when you lift moderate to heavy objects. Squat down like a weightlifter, bend your knees, keep your back in its natural arch, and let your legs do the lifting. Your leg muscles are much more powerful than the smaller muscles in your back.
- Do not jerk. Use a smooth motion and lift straight up.
- Do not twist or turn your body while lifting. Keep your head up and look straight ahead. Hold the load close and keep it steady.

Carrying the load

- Change direction by turning your feet, not your back.
- Your nose and your toes should always be pointing in the same direction. Any sudden twisting can result in taking out your back.
- Rest if you fatigue. Set the load down and rest for a few minutes.

Setting the Load Down

- Bend your knees, squat down and let your legs do the work.
- Keep your back curves. Remember not to twist your body while setting down a load, and keep your head up.
- Keep the load close.
- Plan your release. Once the load is where you want it, release your grip. Never release your grip until the load is secure.

Using Trolleys and Lifting Aids

- Push rather than pull. It is easier and safer to push than to pull. You can use your body weight to assist when pushing.
- Keep close to the load and lock your arms. Try not to lean over and keep your back in its natural arches.
- Use both hands. Carts are easier to push and control using both hands.
- Use tie-downs, if necessary, to secure the load.

