

MODEL: Policy and procedure on manual handling

Policy statement

Statistics show that manual handling is one of the most common causes of injury in the workplace. These injuries often have long-term effects. This policy is intended to reduce the risk of manual handling injuries and provide guidance on the measures that should be taken to ensure safe lifting and carrying.

Arrangements for securing health and safety

Eliminating hazardous manual handling activities

The organisation will ensure that operations which involve manual handling are eliminated, so far as is reasonably practicable. Measures to achieve this include ergonomic design of the workplace and activity, and the provision of automated or mechanical aids such as trolleys, chutes and conveyors.

Assessment of risk

Competent persons will carry out an assessment of the risks of manual handling activities. Identified risks will be reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable. The following factors will be considered during the assessment.

The Task

Bending and stooping to lift a load significantly increases the risk of back injury. Items should ideally be lifted from no lower than knee height and no higher than shoulder height. Outside this range, lifting capacity is reduced and the risk of injury is increased.

If items must be lifted from above shoulder height, a stand or suitable means of access should be used. Items which are pushed or pulled should be as close to waist level as possible. Pushing is preferable, particularly where the back can rest against a fixed object to give leverage.

Carrying distances should be minimised, especially if the task is repeated. Repetitive tasks should be avoided where possible. Tasks that involve lifting and carrying should be designed to allow for sufficient rest breaks to avoid fatigue. Avoid tasks that require twisting the body where possible.

The Load

The load should be kept as close as possible to the body's trunk to reduce strain and should not be of such size as to obscure vision. An indication of the load's weight and centre of gravity should be provided.

Unstable loads should be handled with particular caution. The change in centre of gravity is likely to result in overbalancing. Ensure there is a secure handhold, using gloves where necessary to protect against sharp edges or splinters.

The Individual

Consideration must be given to age, body weight and physical fitness. Regard must also be given to personal limitation; employees must not attempt to handle loads that are beyond their capabilities. Assistance must be sought when necessary.

Allowances should be made for people with genuine physical or clinical reasons for avoiding lifting. Pregnant women and very recent mothers should not be required to undertake hazardous lifting or carrying tasks.

Sufficient knowledge and understanding of the work is an important factor in reducing the risk of injury. Individuals undertaking lifting or carrying will be given suitable instruction, training and information to undertake the task with minimum risk.

The Environment

There must be adequate space to enable the activity to be safely conducted and the transportation route must be free of obstructions. Lighting, heating and weather conditions must be considered. Floors and other working surfaces must be free from slipping and tripping hazards, and adequate ventilation is required, particularly when natural ventilation is lacking.

Other Factors

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) may be necessary whilst carrying out manual handling activities. If the use of PPE restricts safe and easy movement, this should be reported. Constant interruptions from other workers must also be avoided, as it can reduce concentration.

Manager responsibilities

Managers must ensure that:

- manual handling assessments are carried out where relevant and records are kept
- safety representatives or the employees directly are consulted about control measures before such measures are implemented
- employees are properly supervised
- adequate information and training is provided to persons carrying out manual handling activities
- any injuries or incidents relating to manual handling are investigated, with remedial action taken
- employees adhere to safe systems of work
- safety arrangements for manual handling operations are monitored and reviewed

- employees undertaking manual handling activities are suitably screened for reasons of health and safety, before doing the work
- special arrangements are made for individuals with health conditions which could be adversely affected by manual handling operations.

Employee responsibilities

Employees must:

- report to management (in confidence) any personal conditions which may be affected by manual handling activity
- comply with instruction and training provided
- ensure their own health and safety is not put at risk when carrying out manual handling activities
- use equipment which has been provided
- report any problems relating to the activity to a responsible person.

Information and training

Suitable information and training will be provided to persons required to carry out manual handling activities. Training needs will be identified and reviewed by a responsible person. Refresher training will also be given.

Employees will be informed of approximate weights of loads to be handled and objects with an uneven weight distribution.

Responsibility

[Insert job title] is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Manual handling operations mean any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving of it) by hand or by bodily force. Many people hurt backs, arms, hands or feet lifting everyday loads, not just when the load is too heavy. More than a third of all injuries reported each year to the Health and Safety Executive and to local authorities are the result of manual handling activities.

Upper limb disorders can happen in almost any workplace where people do repetitive manual handling activities or work in awkward postures for prolonged periods of time, or as a result of one-off incidents.

Early symptoms may be temporary muscular aches and pains, but if such work is not properly managed, they can develop into chronic and disabling disorders. Damage can build up over time, causing pain and discomfort in necks, backs, shoulders, arms, hands or fingers.

Most cases could be avoided by the provision of suitable and regularly maintained mechanical aids, together with relevant training on manual handling and the safe use of equipment.

Statement of intent

The aim of this policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of our employees while they are at work, in relation to manual handling activities, and to comply with all relevant legislation, including the:

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002)
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended).

Employer's responsibilities

To ensure that manual handling activities are undertaken safely and that safe systems of work are clearly understood throughout the organisation, we will:

- identify all manual handling tasks and situations where there is a risk of injury
- avoid manual handling tasks, wherever practicable
- assess and reduce unavoidable risks
- provide employees with adequate information, instruction and training to enable them to perform their work safely
- ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the requirements of this policy
- review this policy at least annually, or more frequently if significant changes occur.

Procedure

To fulfil our responsibilities as outlined above, we will:

- identify all manual handling operations and activities undertaken by our employees
- complete an initial appraisal of all operations to determine if a risk of injury to employees is present
- avoid, wherever possible, manual handling tasks where there is a risk of injury to employees
- complete a detailed assessment of each manual handling operation if the risk is unavoidable
- develop safe systems of work
- inform all employees involved in manual handling operations of any possible risks and how these can be avoided
- provide employees with sufficient information, instruction and training on approved, safe manual handling techniques, to ensure their health and safety while undertaking tasks
- deliver appropriate training in the use of any mechanical aids employees are expected to use
- ensure appropriate health checks are made on the individuals performing the tasks, especially vulnerable people, and ensure that employees bring to our attention any changes in their own medical conditions
- periodically assess accident records to identify any trends in musculoskeletal injuries and ensure that serious injuries are appropriately reported.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually unless organisational or legal changes necessitate an earlier review.

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