

## ***Introduction***

National statistics show that more than a quarter of accidents reported are associated with the manual handling of loads. Sprains and strains are common together with cuts and bruises. No type of work is immune from this source of injury, whether in offices, workshops, laboratories, kitchens and delivery activities.

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that Departments have arrangements in place to manage the risks associated with the manual handling of loads arising from the work of the Department.

## ***Duties and Responsibilities***

### **Heads of Department**

The HoD must ensure that Departmental arrangements are in place to identify and manage the risks associated with manual handling activities. The arrangements must ensure that:

- manual handling operations are avoided where possible;
- manual handling operations that cannot be avoided are assessed for risk;
- the risk of injury is reduced using the assessment as a basis for action.
- assessments are carried out by the managers of the work;
- managers are competent to conduct the assessment.

### **Managers and Supervisors**

Managers and supervisors are responsible to the Head of Department for the management of the work activities under their control. They must assess the risks of the work under their control which involves manual handling and ensure;

- the implementation and maintenance of relevant risk control measures;
- the provision of suitable information, instruction and training;
- appropriate levels of supervision of staff and students by taking account of their experience and skills.

### **Staff and Graduate Students**

Employees must co-operate with their manager or supervisor in the making of assessments by:

- making full and proper use of risk control measures i.e. system of work and/or prescribed safety equipment,
- report any defects or problems
- attend training directed by their Manager
- report any condition which might affect their ability to handle loads safely.

## ***Assessment of Risk***

If the risk of injury associated with manual handling operations cannot be dismissed as trivial or insignificant Managers must consider if they can be avoided by **eliminating**, **automating** or **mechanising** the operation. If this is not possible then a formal risk assessment must be conducted and measures to control the risks implemented.

### ***1. Identify the hazards and assess the risks***

The hazards of manual handling operations can be arranged under the following headings: **task**, **load**, **working environment** and **individual capability**. These factors can be broken down as follows:

## **1.1 The Task**

*Does the task involve:-*

1. twisting the trunk;
2. stooping;
3. excessive lifting or lowering distance;
4. holding the load at a distance from the trunk;
5. an incorrect posture by the handler;
6. carrying the load excessive distances;
7. excessive pushing or pulling of the load;
8. a risk of sudden movement of the load;
9. frequent or prolonged physical effort;
10. insufficient rest or recovery periods;
11. handling while seated;
12. team handling?

## **1.2 The Load**

*Is the load:-*

1. too heavy for the individual's capacity;
2. bulky or unwieldy;
3. difficult to grasp i.e. smooth, wet or slippery;
4. unstable or are contents liable to shift;
5. sharp, hot or potentially damaging?

## **1.3 The Working Environment**

*Are there:-*

1. space constraints preventing good posture;
2. uneven, slippery or unstable floors;
3. variations in the levels of floors or work surfaces;
4. extremes of temperature, humidity, or air movement;
5. poor lighting conditions?

## **1.4 The Individual**

*Does the task:-*

1. require unusual strength, height etc.;
2. put at risk those who are pregnant or those with health problems;
3. require special knowledge or training for its safe performance?

Once you have identified the hazards involved in the manual handling operations associated with the work you manage you must evaluate the risks i.e. what is the likelihood of injury occurring? If there is a significant risk of injury then you must implement measures to reduce the risk.

## **2. Reducing the Risk**

The assessment must indicate what measures are to be taken to reduce the risk of injury to those involved in the manual handling operation. Following the approach taken in section 1 the measures to control the risk can be arranged under the following headings:

### **2.1 The Task**

1. improve the task layout, e.g. storage of loads at waist height;
2. use the body more efficiently i.e. reduce or eliminate the need for twisting, stooping or stretching;
3. improve the work routine, e.g. minimise the need for fixed postures, reduce the frequency of handling loads;
4. avoid lifting loads from the floor while seated where possible;
5. introduce safe team handling where it would be difficult or unsafe for one person;
6. where appropriate use personal protective equipment such as gloves, overalls or safety shoes;
7. ensure any handling aids or personal protective equipment is maintained and is accessible.

## 2.2 The Load

1. make it lighter by breaking down loads;
2. make it smaller or easier to manage;
3. make it easier to grasp by providing handles or handgrips;
4. make it more stable by packaging objects so they will not shift;
5. make it less damaging to hold, e.g. avoid sharp edges or corners and where this is not possible use suitable personal protective equipment; adequately insulate containers of hot or cold materials or where this is not possible use suitable personal protective equipment.

## 2.3 The Working Environment

1. there should be adequate room to manoeuvre during manual handling operations;
2. pay particular attention to the condition and nature of the floor surface; spillages should be cleared up promptly;
3. where more than one level is involved, the transition should be made by a gentle slope or well positioned steps;
4. extremes of temperature and excessive humidity should be avoided where possible;
5. ensure there is adequate lighting.

## 2.4 The Individual

1. particular consideration be given to those who are or recently have been pregnant or are known to have a history of back trouble, hernia or other injury;
2. provide information and appropriate training on the manual handling operation.

## ***Record and Review the Assessment***

The significant findings of the assessment must be recorded and communicated to those affected. The assessment must be reviewed at regular intervals (e.g. every 12 months) or if it's no longer valid e.g. working conditions or personnel have changed or there has been a significant change in the manual handling operation.

The risk assessment can be recorded on the form available on safety services website as follows:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/safety-services/a-z/risk-assessment>

## **Training**

The following training courses are provided by Safety Services:

- Manual Handling and Lifting Training;
- Manual Handling Risk Assessment (for Managers and Supervisors)

Further Information and booking arrangements can be found at the following link:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/safety-services/learning/scheduled>

Safety Services Reference(s):

Manual Handling Guidance	
First Published	January 2010