

Manual Handling in the Workplace: Employee Factsheet

What is manual handling?

Manual handling involves the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving of a load. This includes pulling on a rope or lever, as well as directly handling the load.

Your employer will have carried out a manual handling assessment of work involving significant manual handling to determine how the risk can be minimised, for example by avoiding unnecessary lifting, using mechanical assistance and ensuring that staff are appropriately trained.

REMEMBER: Bad manual handling techniques cause injury.

Good handling technique:

- Stand reasonably close to the load, feet hip-width apart, one foot slightly forward pointing in the direction you are going
- Bend your knees and keep your back straight
- Get a secure grip on the load
- Breathe in before lifting as this helps to support the spine
- Keep the load close to your body
- Do not carry a load that obscures your vision
- Lift slowly and smoothly
- Avoid jerky movements
- Avoid twisting your body when lifting or carrying a load
- When lifting to a height from the floor, do it in two stages
- When two or more people lift a load, one person must take control to coordinate the lift.

Considerations for manual handling:

- Use mechanical handling methods, if possible, e.g. forklifts or pallet trucks
- Know your capabilities; only tackle jobs that you can handle
- Ask for help if you need assistance
- Make sure there is a clear walkway with good lighting to the work area
- Where possible, establish the weight of the load before lifting
- Wear gloves to protect against cuts and punctures
- Wear safety footwear to protect from falling loads
- Carry out a trial lift by rocking the load from side to side then try lifting it slightly to get a 'feel' for it.

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Did you know?

Manual handling is the biggest single cause of over seven-day accidents at work.

The total number of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WRMSDs) cases in 2015/16 was 539,000 out of a total of 1,311,000 for all work-related illnesses, 41% of the total.

An estimated 8.8 million working days were lost due to WRMSDs, an average of 16 days lost for each case. This represents 34% of all days lost due to work related ill-health in 2015/16.

Your responsibilities

Every employee must take reasonable care of their own H&S and that of others who may be affected by their actions. Co-operate with your employer and make full and proper use of any system of work provided by them.