



3.3 LIFTING AND HANDLING

Guidance and Procedures

Statistics show that manual handling is one of the most common causes of absence through injury in the workplace. More than one-third of lost time accidents are caused in this way. These injuries may often have long-term effects, severely affecting earning potential and subsequently lifestyle and leisure activities.

These arrangements are intended to assist in reducing the risk of manual handling injuries and provide guidance on the measures that should be taken to ensure safe lifting and carrying in the workplace.

There is also specific guidance available to staff with regards to the moving and handling of people, primarily within the field of Social Care. This guidance is contained within this Policy (Part 4 (Appendix K)).

Common Injuries

The physical risks from lifting and handling incorrectly include:

Lifting.

- Back injuries
- Slipped discs
- Sprains and strains
- Torn ligaments and tendons
- Hernias etc.

Handling.

- Cuts and abrasions
- Crush injuries
- Penetration of sharp objects.

A back injury, once sustained, frequently causes permanent weakness.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as Amended) impose a duty on employers to manage the risks associated with manual handling activities.

They also establish a clear hierarchy of measures:

1. Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable
2. Assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided, and
3. Reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable.

1. Avoidance.

A judgement should be made on the nature and likelihood of injury. It need not be necessary to assess in great detail, particularly if the operation can be avoided or the risk of injury is low. In seeking to avoid manual handling the first question to ask is whether movement of the load can be eliminated altogether. This may be achieved by introducing mechanical aids such as trolleys or sack barrows.

2. Assessment of Risk.

Where the task cannot be avoided then a more detailed assessment of risk will need to be carried out by a competent person, an assessment checklist is at Appendix L

The assessment should take into account:

- The task itself
- The load being moved
- The environment and likely conditions and
- The individual capability.

Employees should be encouraged to get readily involved in this assessment, as their local knowledge may prove invaluable.

Guidance on carrying out a Manual Handling Risk Assessment can be found in the Corporate Manual appendices.

3. Reduce the risk of injury.

Appropriate steps must be taken to reduce the risk of injury to persons who carry out manual handling activities.

It is convenient to continue with the same structured approach used during the risk assessment to reduce the risk of injury associated with each factor.

Additional tips for safer Lifting and Handling Activities.

Shape and size of load:

- heavy loads should be broken down into smaller, lighter, manageable sizes
- awkward shape loads often place strain on the body - obtain help
- holding compact loads close to the body reduces strain
- if there are no hand holds to raise or carry load, use barrow, trolley, hook or slings

Lifting

Before attempting to lift an object remember these six points:

1. Keep the back as straight as possible, maintaining its natural shape.
2. Keep arms close to the body
3. Keep the chin in
4. Stand with feet slightly apart with one foot slightly in front of the other, facing the direction of travel.
5. Breathing freely bend the knees and lift by straightening the legs
6. Grip with the palm of the hand and not fingers only

Suitable protective clothing should be worn as necessary, e.g. gloves, safety footwear, safety helmet and eye protection.

Lowering the load

- Ensure area is free from obstructions
- Bend at knees to semi squatting position
- Keep back erect, head up, looking ahead
- Adjust load position to avoid trapping fingers; release grip of load

Team lifts

Where heavy loads are involved help will be needed to assist in lifting, carrying and lowering:

- Persons should be of similar height and build to provide balance and distribution of load
- One person should give instructions during lifting, carrying and lowering to ensure all persons share the weight
- Use specially designed lifting aids when carrying heavy, awkward loads, e.g. large gas cylinder

Stacking

- Heavy and/or awkward loads should not be lifted above shoulder height
- Use a stable platform to stand on, keeping elbows close to body
- Ensure stability of stacked material before placing further items

Carrying loads under one arm supported on the hip may cause strain and should be avoided.

Changing grip should not be attempted while carrying. Rest load on ledge or firm surface for support, then change grip.

Where this is not possible all employees at risk to lifting injuries will be trained in the appropriate lifting techniques.

If the load is felt to be too heavy or cannot be lifted without strain GET HELP.