

HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET 7

Manual Handling

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, amended 2002, and accompanying guidance provide guide-lines to prevent the risk of injury to employees whilst carrying out manual handling operations.

These regulations specify a number of steps which must be undertaken:

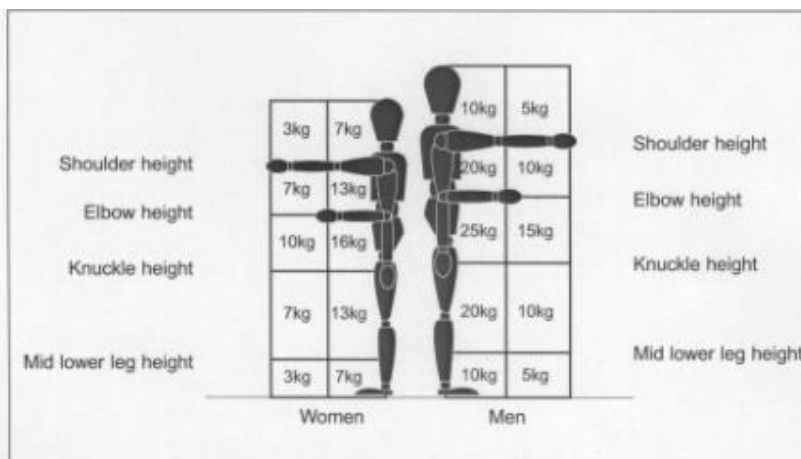
1. Avoid Hazardous Manual Handling

The first step to take is to decide whether you could avoid these operations altogether. For instance:

- Could the operation be eliminated?
- Could the process be brought to the product rather than carry the product to the process?
- Could the process be automated or mechanised e.g. provide sets of wheels; use sack trolleys; use hand pallet trucks; use hoists, slings; use fork lift trucks.

2. Carry Out An Assessment

Involvement of the workforce in this process has been highly successful for many firms. An assessment must be carried out of all manual handling operations which involve a risk of injury. It is not always easy to decide which operations involve risk of injury. However the following diagram is a numerical guide which indicates some of the upper limits of manual handling beyond which a risk assessment will be necessary **e.g. lifting anything greater than a 5kg weight at arms length above shoulder height could involve risk of injury.**



The numerical guideline above must be considered in the context of the Guidance Document and is dependant on the workers involved.

3. Areas To Consider

An assessment of the risks attached to a manual handling operations should be carried out by someone who has a practical knowledge of the tasks being performed. The following risk factors must be considered.

- **The Task:** is the load held away from the trunk; is there twisting stooping or reaching upwards; is there repetitive handling; is a long carrying distance involved; is there unpredictable movement of loads; is sufficient rest or recovery time allowed?
- **The Load:** is it heavy, bulky or unwieldy; difficult to grasp; unstable or unpredictable?
- **The Working Environment:** are there constraints on posture; poor floors; variations in level; hot, cold or humid conditions; strong air movements; poor lighting conditions; restrictions on movement or posture from clothes or personal protective equipment?
- **Individual Capacity:** does the job involve unusual capability; endanger those with a health problem; endanger pregnant women; or call for special information or training?
- **Avoid generic assessment.**

An assessment would normally be written down unless it is so simple it could be repeated at any time. It must, of course, be reviewed at regular intervals and repeated as necessary.

4. Reducing The Risk Of Injury

Once the assessments have been made, steps must be taken to reduce the risk of injury to the lowest level reasonably practical. Again, considerable detail is given in the Guidance to the Regulations. Here are some examples of ways of reducing the risk:

- **The Task:** use mechanical aids to eliminate or reduce handling; ensure logical work layout and that loads are stored at optimum heights; employ teamwork for heavy or awkward loads; adopt a better work routine to improve posture, frequency of load handling and rest pauses; use protective clothing such as gloves, overalls and boots.
- **The Load:** reduce the weight or bulk of a load; make it easier to grasp or provide hand loads; make the load more stable so the weight does not shift.
- **The Working Environment:** reduce space constraints to allow room for manoeuvre; ensure floors are suitable, in good condition and free from obstruction or spillage; avoid work near slopes or changes in level; avoid temperature and ventilation extremes and provide adequate lighting.
- **Individual Capacity:** pay particular consideration to employees who are pregnant, have back trouble or suffer health problems which could affect their manual handling capability; provide comprehensive information and training on all aspects of manual handling, including details and weight distribution of the load where possible.

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