Persimmon | Health, Safety & Environment Department

Manual Handling Standards

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1. Introduction

The purpose of these standards is to give guidance on how the manual handling of materials must be assessed and controlled, in order to protect our employees and sub-contractors from manual handling related injuries.

Work related musculoskeletal disorders from manual handling injuries account for a significant amount of worker ill-health and absences. These can be easily avoided if a simple manual handling plan is put into place.

It is a common misconception that there is a certain weight limit that can be lifted, this is not the case; the amount of weight that can be lifted is down to each individual's ability.

2. Reducing the risk of injury

Prior to any movement of materials by hand, an assessment of the task must be undertaken to prevent and manage risks form manual handling tasks:

Avoid

Can the task be avoided?
For example, on site this could be achieved by having the load dropped off to where it will be used using mechanical means such as using the Telehandler.

Assess

Everyone must assess the risk of a potential injury from any manual handling that can't be avoided. If lifting the load cannot be avoided, consider risks arising from:

- The task;
- The load;
- The working environment;
- Individuals capacity;
- Any materials handling equipment or handling aids used;
- How the work is organised and allocated;
- The pace, frequency and duration of the work.

Extra considerations should be made for expectant mothers, people with a disability, anyone who has an existing injury, young or inexperienced workers, older workers, lone workers and workers who do not fully understand English.

2. Reducing the risk of injury

Reduce

The risk of injury to workers from hazardous manual handling must be reduced to as low as possible. To reduce the risks the load could be split up into more easily manageable sections or another worker could be used to assist with moving the load. Mechanical aids such as a wheel or sack barrow to move the load could be utilised.

2. Reducing the risk of injury

2.1 Assessing the Risk

When it is not possible to avoid moving material by hand a suitable and sufficient risk assessment must be carried out.

Except in the case of very simple operations where verbal instructions may be sufficient, or operations of very short duration, which will not be repeated, the significant findings of assessments should be recorded and kept for as long as they remain relevant.

To assist with assessing manual handling tasks, managers and supervisors should use the Manual Handling Assessment Charts (MAC tool) provided by the HSE.
HSE - MAC tool

Manual handling should also be incorporated into relevant task specific risk assessments as an identified hazard.

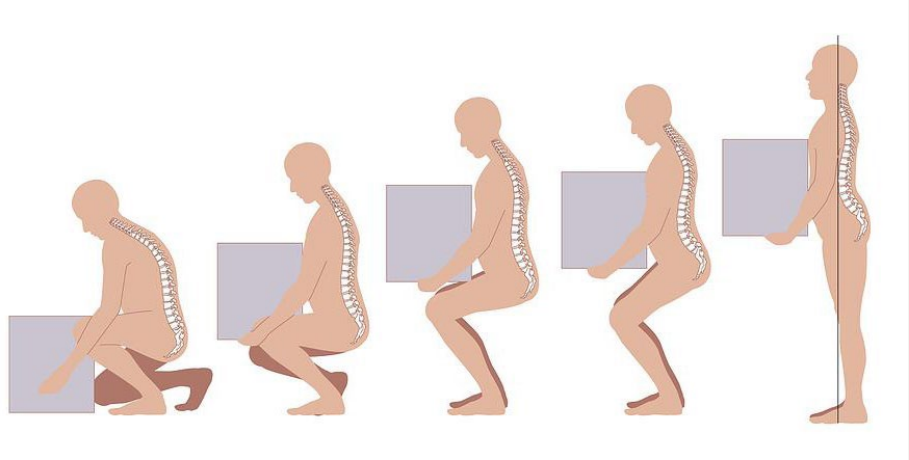
Refer to HSMS – Template Risk Assessments.

3. Good handling techniques

Good handling techniques are essential in the prevention of injury from manual handling operations. The correct method of lifting is to use the strong leg and thigh muscles and to maintain the natural shape of the spine throughout the lift.

Goof handling techniques include:

- Feet apart, giving a balanced and stable base for lifting with the leading leg as far forward as is comfortable.
- Bend the knees so that the hands, when grasping the load, are as near level with the waist as possible. Do not kneel or over bend the knees. Keep the back straight (tucking in the chin helps). Lean forward a little over the load, if necessary, to get a good grip. Keep shoulders level and facing in the same direction as the hips
- Try to keep the arms within the boundary formed by the legs. The optimum position and nature of the grip will depend on the circumstances and individual preference, but it must be secure. A hook grip is less fatiguing than keeping the fingers straight. If it is necessary to vary the grip as the lift proceeds, do this as smoothly as possible.
- Carry out the lifting movements smoothly, raising the chin as the lift begins, keeping control of the load
- When turning to the side, move the feet, do not twist the trunk.



4. General site manual handling considerations

Scaffold

When the Contract Manager plans the site set up, they should ensure that each scaffold is equipped with enough loading bays to ensure that manual handling is kept to a minimum. The Telehandler should be used to transport the scaffold material around. Stillage's should be placed close to the scaffolders work area. Scaffold tubes must not block site entrances.

Buyers

Buyers must ensure that all material purchased has the weight of the material displayed on it. Where possible supply and fit options should be investigated to ensure tasks are completed by the manufacturer/ supplier to limit the need for additional risk assessment and the potential for workers less familiar with these tasks to conduct them, e.g. installation of garage doors, front/rear external doors, etc.

Access and egress to plots

The step up to the plot entrance should be kept to a minimum, where possible each entrance should be ramped up/ additional step if the step up is excessive. Consider how workers will enter and exit plots, especially when manually handling materials to ensure operatives should not be expected to have to unnecessarily stoop down to access/ exit plots. Make sure hazards such as scaffold poles at head height are protected with foam etc.

Housekeeping

A good standard of housekeeping must be maintained at all times, to prevent slips and trips when operatives are manual handling materials.

4. General site manual handling considerations

Plasterboard

Plasterboard brings additional manual handling issue due to its size and may require two people to lift it. Some plots are designed in such a way that operatives struggle to get the plasterboard up stairs and around the stair winder, which leads to the risk of proprietary stairwell protection being removed and then not replaced. Carpenters must install a letter box system as the proprietary stairwell protection, to allow for easy handling of the plasterboards between floors. Once the property has been boarded out then the letter box system can be removed and the floor made good.

Kerb laying

When kerb laying fully mechanised positioning and laying systems should be used, e.g. vacuum devices or mechanical grabs. In rare situations, where it is not possible to use any of these solutions, then only very short sections of kerbs can be laid manually, using handling aids and two people sharing the lift. This must be set out in a MAC chart or task specific risk assessment. Adequate information, instruction and training must also be given to operatives undertaking this task.

Hod-Carriers/ Bricklayer Labourers

Loading out bricks is a repetitive task, where possible this task should be rotated or shared between workers. Brick tongs should be used to lift bricks.

5. Training

Contractors are responsible for ensuring that their operatives have received manual handling training and manual handling assessments have been carried out.

All directly employed workers must undergo manual handling training, relevant to their role.

Site management must raise the awareness of good manual handling techniques through regular Toolbox Talks.

6. Monitoring

Site management and trade supervisors must carry out continuous monitoring of manual handling activities, to ensure that manual handling is being undertaken in a safe way. Contracts Managers and other operating business management, should monitor and report on manual handling arrangements during their regular site visits.

The Group HS&E Department will monitor compliance with these standards, via regular site HS&E inspections.

7. Further reading

HSE - Manual handling at work

HSE - Manual handling at work a brief guide

HSE - MAC tool

Refer to HSMS Guidance – Manual Handling Assessment

8. Toolbox talk

Refer to HSMS TBT – Manual Handling