

HSP 4b:

**Procedure for Assessing &
Controlling Manual
Handling Risks**



AUTHORISATION: Signature

Date



Introduction

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 were brought into force on the 1st January 1993 to cut the level of manual handling injuries which account for over 36% of all injuries annually recorded within the UK.

Requirements of the Regulations

In essence the Regulations require that every employer should review all of the manual handling tasks undertaken within the scope of their operations and, wherever possible, avoid the need for his/her employees to undertake any manual handling operation by either:-

- eliminating the manual handling activity altogether, or
- automating or mechanising the process to avoid the need for manual handling

The Regulations clearly impose an obligation on employers to consider designing out the need for any manual handling operations and to provide mechanical means of performing these operations wherever possible.

Requirement for Risk Assessment

Where it is not reasonably practicable to avoid undertaking manual handling operations then a suitable and sufficient assessment of each manual handling operation has to be undertaken **before** it is carried out.

Manual Handling Risk Assessment

There are four main characteristics to be considered when undertaking a Manual Handling Operations Risk Assessment. They are as follows:-

- The Task
- The Load
- The Working Environment
- Individual Capability

Each has its own effect on the assessment. However, it is a combination of all of the factors under these headings that influences how safe the task is.

Consultation with those workers who have in the past undertaken similar tasks can provide considerable experience and assistance to those undertaking risk assessments and in drawing up safe systems of work following these risk assessments.

The sub-factors that need to be taken into account when assessing a manual handling operation in terms of the Task, the Load, the Working Environment and Individual Capability are as follows:-

The Task

- Nature of the task - find out how much reaching bending, stooping, and twisting is involved with the task
- Position of the load relative to the handler ie degree of control – does the load require lifting above head height? (installing a lintel or fixing plasterboard on a ceiling requires a greater degree of effort and control than if it was being carried at waist height)

HSP 4b:



The Task
Continued

- Frequency and duration of manual handling determines the degree of risk. Is the operation repetitive and does it involve repeated bending, twisting and/or reaching movements over a period of time? The effect of these over a period of time can significantly increase the risk of injury eg bricklaying.

The Load

- Is it bulky, heavy, unwieldy, hard to grasp?
- Does the weight, size, shape and/or stability of the load make it difficult to control?

The Working Environment

- Is it hot, cold, windy, poorly lit? Are there steps, slopes, uneven ground, poor or restricted access arrangements/availability?
- Are there constraints on posture?
- Poor ground conditions likely to increase the risk of slips, trips and falls?
- Carrying loads on slopes?
- Manually handling materials up to a height? (Scaffold-not on a ladder)
- Installing light roofing sheets in windy conditions

Individual Capability

- Is someone of unusual height or strength required?
- Is the risk increased because the individual already has a health problem eg previous back injury?
- An individual's age, strength, level of skill, knowledge and experience can affect how a person safely handles loads.

Drawing up the Risk Assessment

An example of a risk assessment for handling a heavy load is detailed in Figure 1.

All of the boxes indicating "Yes" indicate an element of hazard/risk and therefore an area for improvement. The objective should be to reduce to as low as is reasonably practicable all of the risk areas indicated by "Yes" answers.

The controls that are required should be entered into the box at the bottom right of the form.

It can be clearly seen from the risk assessment that a single person handling a heavy load presents a significant risk to the worker due to:

- The weight of the load
- Site conditions



- Organisation of the job
- Environmental conditions

**Drawing up the
Risk Assessment**
Continued

The actions identified to make the job easier have been identified as:

- Discussion with the CDM Coordinator/Designer to alter the selection of the type of load eg Can a lighter version of the same product be used?
- Investigate the use of mechanical lifting equipment.
- Use of non-mechanical lifting device or equipment
- Are hand-holds available etc.

By highlighting the risks involved alternatives can be devised for any aspects of the activity in order to make that part and hence the whole of the activity significantly more safe.

Figure 1 provides a useful starting point for assessing and addressing manual handling risks. A blank version is also enclosed for your use.

Where manual handling operations are complex the assistance of an ergonomist or occupational health professional may be required. In this case please contact Nigel McDonald at the Leeds Office