

MANUAL HANDLING

SAFE LIFTING TECHNIQUE

Manual Handling Definition:

Manual handling means any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any animate or inanimate object.

Manual Handling Governance:

- The OHS Act in each of the States and Territories.
- The OHS Regulations in each of the States and Territories.
- National Standard for Manual Tasks 2007
- National Code of Practice for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders from Performing Manual Tasks at Work 2007

Responsibilities under governance:

Employers:

- Identify any foreseeable hazards arising from manual handling
- Assess the risks from the hazards identified
- Eliminate or control those risks using the Hierarchy of control
 1. Elimination
 2. Engineer
 3. Design
 4. Administrative
 5. Personnel Protective Equipment
- Provide instruction, training and information

Employees:

- Where an employee has received appropriate training in safe manual handling techniques, the employee must use those techniques at all times.
- Where an employee has received and undergone appropriate training in the correct use of mechanical aids, personal protective equipment or team lifting procedures, the employee must use those aids, equipment and training at all times.



What are the present weight limits for lifting?

There is no longer a prescribed maximum weight limit for lifting for either men or women.

The weight of the load needs to be considered in relation to a number of other risk factors such as the:

- Actions and movements
- Working posture and position when lifting
- Duration and frequency of manual handling
- Location of loads and the distances moved
- Characteristics of the load

Light loads can still be a problem, if for example they are lifted incorrectly or if light loads are lifted in an environment that is unsafe.

The National Code of Practice for Manual Handling indicates that the risk of injury increases when:

Lifting weights of more than 4.5 kg while seated
Lifting weights above the range of 16-20 kg (weights over 55kgs should not be lifted without mechanical assistance or team lifting)
Pushing, pulling and sliding objects that are difficult to move

Young workers under the age of 18 years of age should not be required to lift, lower or carry more than 16 kg without mechanical or other assistance.

Safe Lifting Technique

Correct lifting procedures are to be used at all times. There are 7 positive steps to follow to minimise the risks of injury when lifting.

1. PREPARATION

The first step in any lifting operation is preparation. Plan how you will carry out the lift and clear away any obstacles. By visualising the lift, you will automatically make your stomach muscles contract. These muscles brace your back and will significantly contribute to injury prevention.



Always remember that regardless of the shape of the object, the principles of safe lifting remain the same. When setting down objects the reverse procedure to lifting should be applied.

By following these simple steps you will significantly reduce the risk of injury when lifting.

The golden rule when lifting is, know your limitations.

The essential lifting message is that the more you bend your knees, the less you use your back.

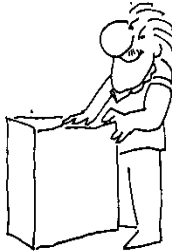
2. SIZE UP THE LOAD

By moving the load sideways and forwards you will be able to ascertain whether it is within your capacity. Always imagine that the object you are about to lift is much heavier than it actually is.



3. PROPER FOOT POSITION

As a general rule the front foot should be beside the object. The back foot should be slightly behind and be hip width from the front foot. This achieves a stable base and allows for even distribution of weight.



4. PROPER HOLD

Ideally with the proper hold the hands should be diagonally opposite for security and comfort. Use the full length of the fingers and where possible the palms to avoid fatigue.



5. BEND THE KNEES

Bend your knees to get down to the load and use the legs to lift it. This way thigh and leg muscles are used and these are the strongest part of your body (your back muscles are only for bracing).



5. STRAIGHT BACK

Keep your back as near to straight as possible, raise your head, keeping your chin in. This will keep your spine straight and enable you to see where you are going.



5. STRAIGHT BACK

During the lift, keep the arms as straight as possible, and the elbows into the side. Don't change your grip while carrying and Directly face the spot on which the load will rest. Never combine lifting with the twisting of your body. If you must turn, do it by moving your feet. Twisting causes the worst type of back injuries.



Team lifting

Whenever team lifting is used, it is essential to co-ordinate and carefully plan the lift. When organising a lift, ensure:

- An adequate number of employees are chosen to help in the lift.
- Team members are of similar height.
- One person is appointed "leader" of the team to perform the lift.
- There is enough area for the team members to manoeuvre as a group.
- Team members know their roles and responsibilities.
- Training in team lifting has been provided and the lift is rehearsed.
- Emergency procedures are in place.

Summing Up

It is crucial that if you feel an item is outside of your limitation that you gain assistance with the lift or obtain mechanical assistance.

If you are not able to do this see your Supervisor.

