

Toolbox Talks Manual handling

Reason

Every year, a significant proportion of all injuries at work are caused by manual handling.

Why

If you get it wrong today you will suffer the consequences tomorrow.

Outline

This talk covers considerations and good techniques for manual handling.

Details

What is manual handling?

Manual handling is any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or bodily force".

The load can be an object, person or animal.

The manual handling regulations set out a clear ranking of measures for dealing with risks from manual handling. They are:

First: Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable;

Second: Assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided; and

Third: Reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable.

Manual Handling risks and how injuries can occur

Manual handling injuries are part of a wider group of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The term 'musculoskeletal disorders' covers any injury, damage or disorder of the joints or other tissues in the upper/lower limbs or the back.

Some MSDs are caused by work activities but some are caused by activities outside work or may be the result of illnesses or diseases unrelated to work. How much a person is affected by MSDs varies widely. Some people are able to continue normal activities but more severely affected people may need adjustments to their workplace to help them continue to work or may need to take time off work to recover.

Safe systems of work for manual handling

A safe system of work should be established for all workers that are required to manual handle. Examples of safe systems of work in relation to manual handling include Risk Assessments and

Method Statements.

If a general risk assessment identifies that there may be a risk of injury from manual handling, a specific manual handling assessment may be required in addition to a Risk Assessment and Method Statement.

It is crucial that all Employees and Contractors under our control co-operate with the findings of our risk assessments and method statements.

What should a Manual Handling Risk Assessment cover?

A manual handling risk assessment should cover the following factors:

TASK - Is the load held or manipulated at a distance from the trunk (torso), Does the task involve twisting the trunk (torso) or sideways bending, stooping or considerable lifting or lowering distances etc.

INDIVIDUAL - Does the job required unusual strength, height etc.? Create a hazard to those who might reasonably be considered to be pregnant or to have a health problem? Require special information to complete the work safely?

LOAD - Is the load heavy, bulky/unweildly, difficult to grasp, unstable with contents likely to shift, sharp, hot cold etc.?

ENVIRONMENT - Space constraints, uneven, slippery or unstable floors, variations in levels of floors such as stairs, extremes of temperature or humidity, exposed to gusts of winds, poor lighting etc.

Safe Use of lifting and handling aids

Mechanical assistance involves the use of handling aids. Some manual handling is retained but requires much less physical energy which can reduce the risk of injury.

Examples of manual handling aids include:

- Simple levers.
- Hoists.
- A trolley, sack truck or roller conveyors.
- Chutes and flow racking.
- Handling devices such as hand-held hooks or suction pads.
- Hand pallet trucks and roll cages.
- Turntables, inverters and drum rotators.
- Powered lift trucks.

Considerations

- Always use mechanical aids instead of manual handling if possible (such as forklifts or pallet trucks).
- Know your capabilities and only tackle jobs you can handle, otherwise seek help.
- Check if there is a clear walkway with good lighting to the work area.
- Where possible, establish the weight of the load before starting to lift.
- Wear gloves to protect against cuts and safety boots to protect from falling loads.
- Carry out a trial lift by rocking the load from side to side, then try lifting it a small way to get a feel for it.

How to carry out manual handling safely

- Stand reasonably close to the load, feet hip-width apart, one foot slightly forward pointing in the direction you're going.
- Flex your knees and slightly curve your back (avoid stooping or a deep squat when starting a lift).
- Get a secure grip on the load.

- A good lifting technique uses the strong muscles in your legs.
- Keep the load close to your body but don't carry a load that obscures your vision.
- Lift slowly and smoothly, avoiding jerky movements.
- Avoid twisting your body when lifting or carrying a load.
- When lifting to a height from the floor, do it in two stages if possible.
- When two or more people lift a load, one person must give directions to co-ordinate the lift.

Questions

- What checks should you carry out before lifting?
- What PPE should you wear and why?
- Describe how you would lift an object safely.
- When two or more people are lifting a load, what should happen?

