

Guidance for Compliance with the Manual Handling Operations Regulations

Background

Nationally injuries arising during manual handling activities account for more than a third of all statutorily reportable accidents (i.e. notifiable to the Health and Safety Executive) where an employee is off work for more than three days (7 days since April 2012). Within the University the number of statutorily reportable accidents is small but of these manual handling accounts for typically 25% and for about 12% of all accident report forms received by the Safety Office.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (MHOR) require that a risk assessment is carried out on manual handling tasks. Manual handling operations cover a wide range of manual handling activities, including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying or supporting a load. The load may be either inanimate - such as a box or a trolley, or animate - a person or an animal.

University Policy Statement

It is University policy that all Manual Handling operations must be carried out in accordance with these Regulations. Heads of School/Department must ensure that all operations of this nature are adequately assessed by a nominated person in the School/Department and all necessary actions, including training, taken to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury. The Safety Office provides a training course in the assessment of manual handling operations. Training courses are also provided for those who carry out manual handling tasks (see further information in the Training section below).

Summary of Legal Requirements

The Regulations describe a hierarchy of measures to be taken to minimise the risk of injury from manual handling operations. Briefly they require the following steps to be taken, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- avoid the need for hazardous manual handling;
- assess the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that cannot be avoided; and
- reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling,

The primary consideration is to avoid the need for manual handling operations at work that could involve the risk of the person doing it being injured, for example, by eliminating handling completely or by automating or mechanising the task. Where this cannot be done, an assessment must be made which should take into account the task, the load, the working environment and individual's capability. Following on from this it will be necessary to take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

Reducing the risk may prove the more difficult aspect of compliance because it requires an ergonomic approach which mirrors the structured approach of the assessment. This involves improvement of the:

- **task layout**, for example storing loads at the optimum position around waist height;
- **training employees** to use their bodies more efficiently, i.e. minimising harmful postures;
- improving the **work routine** so that for example the same muscles are not used repeatedly;
- consideration of **team handling** moves where appropriate, but recognition of the hazards group handling can introduce;
- making the **load** lighter, smaller, or easier to manage and grasp;
- removing **space constraints**;
- giving attention to the nature and condition of **floors**;
- giving attention to other environmental factors such as changes **in level, lighting**, etc.; and
- the provision of comprehensive **information and training** for all employees engaged in manual handling operations.

Employees also have duties. They should:

- follow appropriate systems of work laid down for their safety;
- make proper use of equipment provided for their safety;
- co-operate with their employer on health and safety matters inform the employer if they identify hazardous handling activities;
- take care to ensure that their activities do not put others at risk.

Hazards associated with Manual Handling Operations

The main hazards associated with manual handling tasks are muscular-skeletal injuries (mainly, but not exclusively, to the back), particularly those that can have a cumulative effect upon the body due to the postures involved and the repetitive nature of the task. It is this type of condition that can have a significant impact upon an employee's health.

Other injuries are associated with manual handling, e.g. foot injuries from dropping loads, "striking against" injuries whilst trying to manoeuvre loads in confined spaces. These tend to result in more minor injuries.

Risk Assessment

Link to [Manual Handling Assessment Form](#).

The Health and Safety Executive has placed comprehensive and easy to follow guidance on how to reduce the risk of injury under headings, as mentioned above, of the **Task**, the **Load**, the **Working Environment** and **Individual Capability**.

- Guidance on manual handling risk assessment - [INDG143](#)
- There is also a specific section devoted to [pushing and pulling](#) on the HSE website

The first of these documents (INDG143) includes, on pages 10 and 11, guideline load weights that under most circumstances should normally be acceptable for lifting etc. These are given for men and women according to the position of the load relative to the body, with adjustments if twisting is involved and for frequency or duration of the task.

As with other hazards in the workplace, risk assessments should be recorded for manual handling operations that involve a significant risk of injury to employees. It may then be appropriate for written safe operating procedures to be developed.

For complex manual handling operations or those that involve significant risk, it is recommended that the University's Manual Handling Assessment [form](#) be used for recording the assessment. This is available from the Safety Office website. The completed assessment should be available to those carrying out the tasks.

The University offers training in assessment of manual handling operations to assist those who have a key role in this area, see the [Safety Office website](#) for more information.

Further assessment advice is obtainable from the Safety Office (ext. 13401, bb-safety-office@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk) or Occupational Health (ext. 14329).

Training

It is expected that Schools/Departments arrange for employees to attend the University's basic Moving and Handling course where they are regularly involved in manual handling activities that require an assessment under the criteria above. For more information, see the [Short Course website](#). It may also be appropriate to offer the training to students, particularly postgraduates, if they are involved in significant manual handling as part of their work.

Each School/Department should arrange for specific training /instruction in relation to the actual manual handling operations undertaken by their staff and students. This should take into account the findings of the risk assessment and any particular methods of working that are to be followed.

Further Information

- HSE Publication L23 (2009) - Guidance on the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2004). ISBN 9780717628230. This can be downloaded via the [HSE website](#).
- Safety Office [Information Leaflet](#) for Safe Manual Handling
- Safety in Moving and Lifting Luggage - [Information Leaflet](#) for Student Volunteers