

Toolbox talks

Manual handling

Background information:

Manual handling relates to the moving of items either by lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing or pulling, and is one of the most common causes of injury at work. Almost a third of all injuries at work are caused by accidents during manual handling, with most of the injuries to hands, feet, legs and back. As well as injuries from heavy manual labour, awkward postures and repetitive movements when manual handling, previous or existing injuries are all risk factors implicated in the development of what is called Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD). The main disorder is back injuries and if these injuries are not managed properly can develop into permanent disability. It is important to remember that injuries and MSDs can result from just one bad lift.

Here are some examples of recent accidents:

- i. A foreman sustained a back injury when he tried to lift a pump into an excavation
- ii. A labourer strained his lower back whilst carrying a Heras fence base block
- iii. A labourer pulled his back ligaments due to repetitive shovelling of concrete.

Although the Manual Handling Operations Regulations does not specify what weight a person can lift, it states that any person should not lift any load exceeding their personal capabilities. The regulations also advise manual handling training; however, it is important to remember that training on its own can't overcome a lack of mechanical aids; unsuitable loads; bad working conditions; or pre-existing injuries.

This toolbox talk is not training session, but an awareness of the hazards and controls required for your health and safety.

The Hazard is manual handling and the following are risks from manual handling

- Damage to the bones of spine (i.e. crushed vertebrae, etc.)
- Pulled or torn back muscles or ligaments
- Pulled or torn muscles to shoulders, knees etc.
- Postural related problems (i.e. slipped disc)
- Broken fingers or toes
- Cuts (major or minor).

Health and safety points:

- Supervisors and managers must consult and involve the workforce on assessments of manual handling. The workforce knows first-hand what the risks in the workplace are.
- Avoid unnecessary manual handling. Ask yourself: is there a way of avoiding the operation? Can mechanical lifting aids be used to minimise the amount of manual handling? If the answer is yes to either of these questions, then speak to your supervisor.
- Where the activity is essential and cannot be done using lifting equipment, conveyors, wheeled trollies, or other aids, then a specific manual handling risk assessment must be carried out. All workforce must be aware of what this says.
- Know the weight of the item to be lifted, if you don't know the weight then gently rock the load to assess the weight
- Do not attempt to lift any load that is too heavy, too large or awkward. Get help! But remember when carrying out a two person lift it does not mean you lift twice the weight
- Discuss how heavy or awkward loads are to be lifted with your supervisor
- For a team lift choose one person to call the signals
- Ensure your route is clear of trip/slip hazards
- When lifting, avoid making sudden jerky movements as this puts increased strain on the muscles and ligaments
- Where possible gloves should be worn to protect against cuts, scratches or punctures
- Wear safety footwear to protect toes from falling loads
- When carrying a load avoid twisting the body as this puts unnecessary pressure on your back
- Do not carry a load that blocks your vision
- Notify your supervisor of any condition that could affect your ability to handle loads
- Think the job through:
 - Can you handle the load yourself?
 - Is there a clear, properly lit, walkway to the work or stacking area?
 - Is there a safe stacking/put down area?
 - Will timber packing be required between the articles when stacked?

Document Reference	Process Parent	Revision Status	Document Owner	Date	Page
SH TBT 7.4	SH PRO	Rev 1	Martin Hall	Jan 2020	1 of 2

Toolbox talks

- Seek advice on height restrictions for stacks. Remember, it is often more dangerous de-stacking than stacking.
- Always check that the weight of the load is known before lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling
- Know the correct method of lifting before attempting a manual handling lift:
 - Stand reasonably close to the load, be sure footing is firm and feet are about 300mm apart
 - Squat down by bending the knees, keeping the back naturally straight as you can
 - Place hands where they will not slip and grip firmly
 - Breathe in before lifting – inflating the lungs helps support the spine
 - Use your legs – not your back.
- If you are carrying out manual handling, your employer must provide with you with information and instruction, and where required manual handling training. If you haven't had it – ask!

Question time:

- Q What two questions must you ask yourself to avoid unnecessary handling?
 Q What must you do before handling heavy or awkward loads?
 Q When carrying a load what must you avoid doing?

Have you got any questions?

Record questions on the attendance sheet.

Safety reminder:

Try to avoid unnecessary manual handling. Do not lift, carry, push or pull any load that is too heavy, too large or too awkward.

If you are in doubt about any manual handling task – STOP! and ask your supervisor or Morgan Sindall for advice.

Remember, you only get one body – LOOK AFTER IT