

TIP sheet

Manual Handling

T024 – APRIL 2008



Definition

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

Minimum requirements

Employers are responsible for identifying, assessing and controlling manual handling risks by adopting a risk management approach.

Employers must consult with employees to identify and control manual handling hazards.

The identification of potential manual handling hazards during the design phase of works will enable the risks to be either eliminated or minimised.

Manual handling hazards

Key points when identifying manual handling hazards include:

- Identifying those tasks that have previously caused injury.
- Observation of workplaces and tasks being performed either by inspections, audits or using checklists. Such observations will identify hazards, including movement, posture and layout.
- Objects being handled frequently or for a long period of time, loads moved or carried

over a long distance, and weight and shape of the object.

- If there is a confined space.
- Whether the working surfaces are cluttered, uneven or slippery.
- Individual factors, such as a new employee, age-related factors, or disabilities that may affect task performance.
- Whether clothing or PPE interferes with safe manual handling performance.

Assessment of risks

Where a manual handling hazard has been identified, the risk of injury to a worker must be assessed.

Safety controls

Employers must:

- Ensure that all objects are designed, constructed and maintained so as to eliminate risks arising from the manual handling of the objects.
- Ensure that work practices are designed to eliminate risks arising from manual handling.
- Provide mechanical aids.
- As far as reasonably practicable, achieve risk control by means other than team lifting.
- Provide training to workers performing manual handling tasks.

Safe lifting guidelines

Look at the object to be moved.

- Check size, weight and shape.
- Decide where to hold it.
- Be extra careful of awkward shapes and difficult situations.
- Check for sharp edges, grease, oil, or moisture, which might affect your grip.

Clear the path.

- Make sure there are no obstructions, trip hazards, rough or slippery surfaces.

Check the set down point.

- Decide where and when you will put the object down.

Get help.

- If you have any doubt about the manual handling task, get help from others or use a mechanical lifting aid.

The lift

After sizing the load and assessing its weight, dynamics and dimensions:

- Stand close to the object and get a firm footing.
- Squat down to straddle the load. Keep your back straight and bend your knees.
- Grasp the object and grip firmly and securely.
- Lift with the legs. Then slowly straighten them and bring your back into a vertical position.
- Hold the load firmly and close to the body.

Lift smoothly and avoid jerky motions. Turn your feet instead of twisting your back.

Risk assessment factors

Factors	Examples & Risks
Actions and movement	Bending, twisting & uneven loads, stumbling, risk of body stressing.
Workplace layout	Over-reaching above shoulders or below mid-thighs, or loads too far from body.
Working posture & positions	Prolonged and static work positions, cramped awkward or uncomfortable work points.
Duration & frequency of manual handling	Repetitious, prolonged tasks.
Clothing	Unsuitable/restrictive clothing, footwear or gloves.
Load, Location, Distance	Loads moved long distances or needing accurate placement – forces applied for longer duration increasing body stressing risk.
Weights & Forces	Lifting or applying heavy weights or forces when all the body isn't able to be used, (e.g. sitting, climbing or force applied just by arms or hands or single limb).
Types of Loads	Irregular loads that may obscure vision or increase risk of losing control.
Work Organisation	Unnecessary manual handling, poor scheduling, insufficient people or mechanical aids.
Work Environment	Rough, slippery, uneven walking surface, poor housekeeping.
Skills & Experience	Inadequate training in manual handling. Inexperience in manual handling.
Special needs	Injured, new or ill workers.

References

NSW OHS Act 2000 and OHS Regulation 2001.

RTA OHS Policy 2.16 Manual Handling.

RTA QA Specifications.

All TIP sheets are available on the RTA [internet](#) or contact your OHS facilitator for assistance.