

Manual Handling Risk Reduction for the Transport and Logistics Sector

MAY 2016

Information Sheet

Introduction

This information sheet highlights the physical risks associated with manual handling in the transport and logistics sector. It will explain how you need to recognise these risks and consider appropriate risk reduction measures which may include the use of handling equipment, other engineering interventions or changing the way the work is done.

The information provided will help those who manage health and safety of workers in the transport and logistics sector. It will also help employees to become more aware of the risks associated with manual handling. Examples of risk reduction measures that could be considered appropriate in different workplace settings are illustrated, but is by no means an exhaustive list of possible solutions



Risk Factors for Manual Handling

Between 2009 and 2013 there were 4,991 work related vehicle accidents reported to the Health and Safety Authority. Over one quarter of these accidents were caused by lifting, twisting and turning and pushing of loads, resulting in physical strain and injury of the musculoskeletal system including the back.

Recent data indicates that nearly half of all manual handling accidents reported in the transport and logistics sector were caused by lifting and carrying loads. The main risk factors that relate to lifting and carrying loads are shown in Table 1 overleaf:



Risk Factor	Activity
<p>Force:</p> <p>In this example the employee is lifting a heavy load (45kg) and carrying it over a distance to a shop counter.</p>	
<p>Awkward Posture:</p> <p>In this example two employees are manually lifting and manipulating a load from the back of a truck to ground level outside the truck which results in an awkward, bending posture.</p>	
<p>Repetition:</p> <p>In this example a delivery of product in a truck has to be transferred manually to pallets prior to delivery to the warehouse resulting in repetitive handling of loads.</p>	

What is the law?

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 Chapter 4 Manual Handling of Loads Regulation were developed to regulate manual handling of loads involving the risk of back injury. The regulations have three key requirements:

- Provide mechanical equipment or change the way work is done to avoid the need for manual handling.
- Where manual handling of loads cannot be avoided, take steps to reduce the risk involved by using appropriate mechanical equipment or changing the way that work is done.
- Risk assess the specific work activity (for example, lifting loads from the back of a truck). Consider the risk factors specified in Schedule 3 of the regulation and take steps to reduce the risk of injury.

How do I reduce the risk?

The first step is to recognise that manual handling activity is a potential workplace hazard that needs to be addressed. In order to effectively manage this hazard it is necessary to understand the nature of manual handling work activities carried out in your workplace (for example, product is lifted from the back of a truck or pallets are lifted into position). You then need to consider the potential risks associated with those activities (for example, are heavy loads being handled? Are loads being carried over long distances? Are trolleys or tail lifts available?)

In the example opposite an employee is lifting pallets on his own as he prepares a delivery. The handling of pallets on site can be a potential risk due to the weight of a pallet and the awkward size of the load.

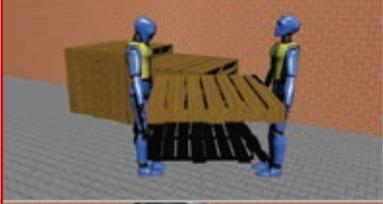


Once you have recognised that there are a range of work activities that require manual handling, it is then necessary to complete task specific risk assessments of those work activities in order to identify potential risk factors and appropriate control measures to avoid or reduce the risk. When completing these risk assessments, it is important that good quality information is collected through observing the work activity, consulting with those that carry out the work and recording important detail including the weight of loads handled.

The people that work in the transport and logistics sector have a comprehensive understanding of the range of solutions or appropriate control measures that could avoid or reduce the risk of injury, particularly back injury. The solutions that are put in place to avoid or reduce the risk factors for the manual handling of loads in a particular work activity must be specific and must address the risk factors that have been identified as part of the task specific risk assessment.

The HSA's "Guide on Manual Handling Risk Management in Transport and Storage" gives direction on how to complete task specific risk assessments using a five step model. The Health and Safety Executive UK Mac Tool can be used in conjunction with the five step model in order to assess the level of risk and decide what actions need to be taken to avoid or reduce risk.

Examples of control measures that could avoid or reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury or ill health in the transport and logistics sector

Activity	Risk Factors Addressed	Solution
Product is being transferred from a truck at a loading bay using an extended telescopic belt conveyor and a variable height pallet truck.	This results in reduced awkward posture and eliminates the carrying of loads over long distances.	
A delivery person transporting boxes upstairs using a stair climber.	This reduces the forces required to transfer product over long distances and gives the delivery person more control over the load.	
Two workers completing a team lift when lifting pallets.	This reduces the force required to lift and carry the load and allows the two employees to control the load with good posture.	
Improved planning of the layout of product in a courier van.	This allows the employee to place heavier loads between knee and elbow height in the van which reduces the forces required to lift loads and gives the employee more control over the load.	
Product is being transferred from the back of a truck using a tail lift.	This avoids the manual handling of product from the back of the truck to the ground level outside the truck and eliminates awkward body posture.	

Conclusion

Once solutions have been identified and agreed it is then necessary to implement the appropriate control measures. Employees need to be given clear instruction so that they understand what controls have been put in place, how the controls will address the risk factors and how they should carry out the task in a safe manner using the equipment or other controls provided.

Further Information

Guide on Manual Handling Risk Assessment in the Transport and Storage Sector, HSA 2013

Guide on Prevention and Management of Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace, HSA 2012

Mac Tool <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg383.htm>

Health and Safety Authority website www.hsa.ie

Contact the HSA Workplace Contact unit on Locall: **1890 289 389** or email: wcu@hsa.ie