

Manual handling guidance and FAQs

Manual handling (or moving and handling which is a term used specifically in health and social care, because of the need to assist individuals with moving, as well as handling inanimate loads) is a major cause of accidents in the workplace and although many of the injuries are to the lower back, other parts of the body may also be affected. These injuries include:

- Fractures – dropping a heavy load can crush fingers or toes.
- Wounds – from handling objects with sharp edges, rough surfaces or extremes of temperature.
- Hernias – the strain of lifting can cause painful ruptures in the abdominal wall.
- Spinal injuries – damage to vertebrae and the spinal cord can cause permanent disability.

Another common myth is that manual handling only really affects industries associated with heavy work, this is not the case, it affects everyone in all industries and in all areas of KCC. These injuries do not only cause pain, disability and suffering, they can also be costly to KCC due to disruption, sickness payments, cover for the injured individual and possible claims.

Hazardous lifting should be avoided wherever possible, however this is not always feasible and where moving and handling cannot be avoided managers are required to prevent the risk of injury to employees who, in the course of their duties, undertake manual handling. In order to prevent the risk of injury, managers must ensure risk assessments are carried out for all manual handling tasks that could result in injury.

Definitions

- Manual handling (moving and handling) – transporting or lifting a load by hand or by bodily force. This includes lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving a load.
- Load – any item or object being transported or supported, including a person or animal.
- Risk assessment – an examination of the workplace and work activities designed to identify the measures that need to be taken to minimise work-related injuries and ill health.
- Hazard – anything with the potential to cause harm.
- Risk – how likely it is that the harm will actually happen, how many people it could affect and how severe the consequences could be.

Scope

When considering what activities take place and who may be affected, managers need to consider all activities that involve the risk that injury could be caused by moving, handling, lifting, carrying, supporting, pushing and pulling etc.

The why, what and how

Manual handling injuries can seriously affect someone's ability to work as well as their home life. Annual accident figures for KCC (2017/18) show that manual handling accounts for 5% of all our total accidents.

To be able to manage manual handling risks, managers need to make sure staff are aware of what risks are present and what can reasonably be done to control them.

These reasonable measures must be **suitable and sufficient** and include:

- All routine and non-routine activities.
- Identifying what reasonable measures can be put in place so employees can avoid moving and handling tasks.
- Assessing any moving and handling tasks that cannot be reasonably avoided ensuring the risk of injury is reduced to a reasonable level.
- Ensuring everybody is aware of the risks they face by carrying out documented risk assessments and providing all those affected with the latest, detailed information.
- Devising and providing details of safe methods of working which identify the safest means of carrying out tasks ensuring all identified hazards are eliminated or the risks minimised.

- Ensuring everybody is adequately trained by a competent person to carry out specific tasks to the level that is required.
- Providing adequate supervision for tasks as required.
- Assessing the health and safety of individuals and their ability to perform moving and handling tasks.
- Monitoring and maintaining the control systems in place. This will involve monitoring and reviewing systems to see if they are working and making any necessary changes where failings are identified, where changes are made to aspects of the work or where new risks have arisen.
- Investigating any injuries or incidents that do occur during or following manual handling tasks and taking remedial action.

Employees within KCC have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own safety and that of other people and must therefore:

- Use equipment and apply safe systems of work in accordance with the instruction and training they have received.
- Ensure their own and others' safety is not put at risk when carrying out their tasks.
- Report any problems or personal conditions relating to an activity that may be detrimental to that activity.

Associated procedures and documentation

The documentation below refers to legislation and to industry standards. These can be found via www.hse.gov.uk.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992

Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, as amended 2002

Provision and use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998

Frequently asked questions

What information and training must managers provide to employees?

Managers must make sure they inform employees and others of the risks they face in the workplace and about the control measures that have put in place to manage these risks. This must be communicated in a way that ensures everyone understands what is required of them. This means thinking about staff in minority

groups who may require an alternative format or more specific training to suit their individual needs.

Health and safety training should be provided to all new KCC employees as part of their induction and if the risks facing employees and others change refresher training must be provided.

Training should cover:

- manual handling risk factors and how injuries can occur
- how to carry out safe manual handling
- appropriate systems of work for the individual tasks and environment
- use of mechanical aids
- practical work to allow the trainer to identify and put right anything the trainee is not doing safely.

Managers also need to ensure that when allocating work they make sure that the demands of the task do not exceed the staff member's individual knowledge and capabilities.

Managers are advised to keep records of what information and training has been provided and to whom.

Where can I get health and safety help and advice?

Health and safety advisers and manual handling trainers can assist with carrying out your responsibilities. Help is also available from a number of individuals or departments, such as Staff Care Services (Occupational Health), Facilities Management, Property Management and Trade Unions. Your adviser will assist you and inform you if more specialist help is required.

Who should carry out a manual handling assessment?

The Manager is overall responsible for health & safety and ensuring suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place, however they may delegate the task of completing the assessment. A risk assessment must be carried out by a competent person and competence may be defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities.

A person is considered competent when they have sufficient training and experience or knowledge of the workplace and other qualities to enable them to assist properly in doing the work in question. This means they need to be able to make sound judgements and they need knowledge of the best practicable means to reduce those risks identified.

When should managers carry out a manual handling (moving and handling) risk assessment?

Where a manual handling activity cannot be avoided and no previous risk assessment for the particular task has been undertaken, when an incident occurs or when it is felt that the current risk assessment is no longer valid i.e. because the task has changed, when new equipment is being used or the needs of the individual require further consideration.

It is important to note that some people are particularly vulnerable and need special consideration in any risk assessment, such as expectant mothers, young people or anyone with special needs, including those with ill health or a disability.

How do I carry out a manual handling (moving and handling) assessment – what do I need to do?

Most situations will require just a few minutes' observation to identify ways to make the activity easier and less risky i.e. less physically demanding. Your employees can also help you carry out the assessment - they often know what problems there are and how best to solve them and it is especially useful to get their input when considering buying new equipment.

When carrying out an assessment the assessor must consider the following factors:

It may be possible to group certain manual handling (moving and handling) activities together to produce a general assessment and this is known as a generic assessment, i.e. one that is common to several employees or to more than one site or type of work. However this should only be done if there are no individual or local factors which need to be taken into account, for example differences in stature, competence etc.

Once an assessment has been made, reasonable and practical steps must be taken to reduce or remove factors contributing towards a risk of injury as identified by the risk assessment, such as changing of storage systems, splitting bulk deliveries into smaller loads or introducing mechanical aids.

The manual handling of inanimate loads guidance and risk assessment form and the moving and handling of people guidance and risk assessment form will take you through the stages of completing an assessment, together with guidance and points to consider.

Do I have to provide mechanical aids in every case?

If it is reasonably practicable to do so and the risks identified in your risk assessment can be reduced or eliminated by this means then it is recommended that mechanical aids be provided. In addition to this it is good practice to consider mechanical aids in other situations as well, as they can improve productivity as well as safety. Even something as simple as a sack truck can make a big improvement.

Note however that introducing mechanical aids can create additional hazards if not carefully thought through. Consideration includes:

- space to work
- storage of equipment
- maintenance of Equipment
- training of the operators.

When do I need to review the assessment?

The assessment should be reviewed annually, when an incident occurs or when you feel the current risk assessment is no longer valid i.e. because the task has changed, new equipment is being used or the needs of the individual require further consideration.