# Ergonomics and Manual Handling



## – Manual handling

## General >

**This information bulletin provides a guide to Regulation 59 of the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations.**

### What is Manual Handling?

Manual handling is any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any animate or inanimate object. It means more than just lifting or carrying an object, and includes a wide range of activities such as pulling a lever, operating a hand-held power tool or shifting another person.

### Intent of the regulation

The intent of the regulation is to ensure that employers take responsibility for ensuring that work practices and workplaces are designed to minimise the risk of injury to workers while undertaking any activity involving manual handling. It includes looking at the design, construction and maintenance of plant, equipment, containers and packages that must be manually handled to minimise manual handling risks.

### Preventing manual handling injuries

Employers need to provide a systematic approach to removing the hazards and risks involved with manual handling. This includes identifying the manual handling activities in the workplace, assessing the risk in carrying out those activities, and where the risk is unacceptable, putting into place appropriate control measures to minimise the level of risk.

### Identifying and assessing risks

To identify and assess the risks associated with manual handling, there are a number of things that can be done. These include -

- looking at workplace accident and injury records, including workers compensation records, to identify areas or tasks where accidents or injury is occurring; talking to workers.
- looking at the workplace, in particular taking regard of:
  - the actions and movements of workers;
  - workplace and work station layout;
  - working posture and position;
  - duration and frequency of manual handling;
- personal characteristics where the load is and how far it is to be moved;
- weight of the load;

- force required;
- characteristics of the load and equipment;
- work organisation;
- work environment;
- skills and experience of workers; and
- clothing.

### Controlling the risks

Where a risk to a workers health and safety has been identified, then control measures must be introduced so as to minimise the risk. Control measures may include such things as:

- redesign the task or the workplace to eliminate or reduce the need for manual handling; and
- the use of tools or mechanical assistance to undertake or assist in the task, appropriate training in techniques to be used to minimise risks in manual handling.

Wherever control measures are introduced, follow-up checks need to be made to ensure the controls are working as intended.

### Further information

National Code of Practice for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders from Performing Manual Tasks at Work

NT WorkSafe information bulletins Series 6 – Ergonomics and Manual Handling

ASCC Manual Tasks

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