



Manual Handling

Introduction

In developed countries, there is an average of 20 working days loss per worker annually due to work-related musculoskeletal disorders. Ensuring proper lifting techniques benefits both the employer, in terms of reduced working days lost, and the employee in terms of injury and pain.

Most manual handling injuries effect the back and upper and lower limbs. These injuries often build up over time instead of being caused by a single accident, so proper lifting techniques are important to follow.



Duties of the employer

The main considerations to manage manual handling hazards are:

1. Avoiding the need for hazardous manual handling in the first place
2. Assessing the risk of injury from any manual handling that cannot be avoided
3. Reducing the risk of injury from manual handling by using correct lifting techniques

Engaging experienced employees who are familiar with the processes involving manual handling to conduct a risk assessment on manual handling.

Risk control measures come in various ways and effectiveness. These include:

- » Elimination where a redesigned workflow removes the need for the manual lifting
- » Substitution such repacking a heavy load into smaller load
- » Use of engineering controls such use of pallet jacks and other mechanical aids to lift
- » Administration controls such as implementing frequent breaks, and job rotation among workers
- » Use of Personnel Protective Equipment such as back brace

Manual handling hazards

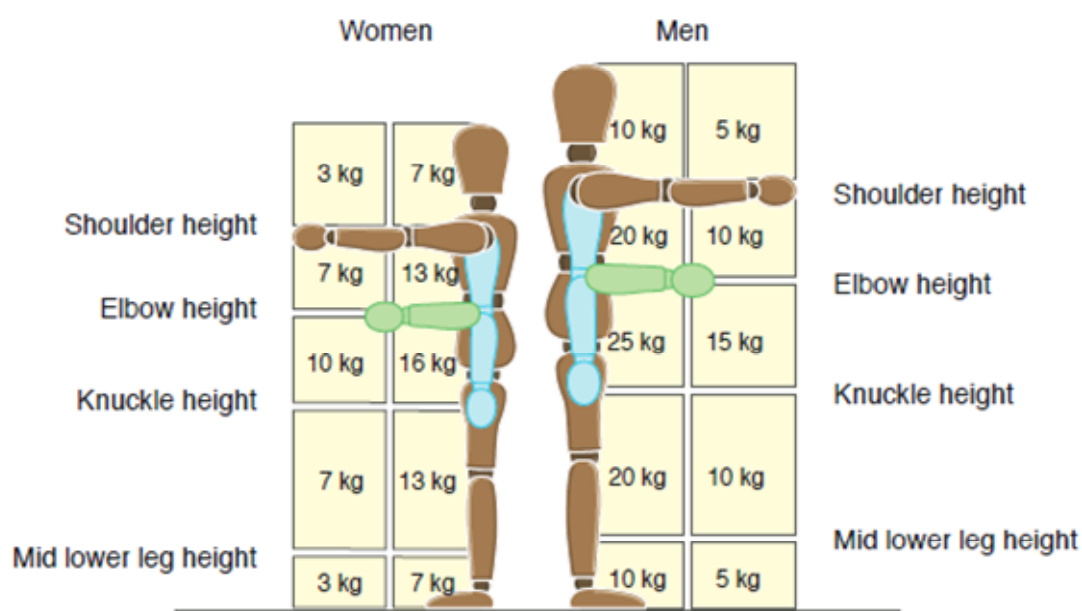
The common hazards to look out for are:

- » Lack of training such as bad lifting posture, wrong lifting techniques
- » Environmental conditions such as untidy work areas
- » Nature of the load such as heavy or awkward loads

To manage the hazards, it is beneficial to:

- » Avoid lifting from floor level or above shoulder height
- » Reduce the amount of twisting, stooping and reaching
- » Minimize the carrying distance
- » Adjust the storage areas to reduce the need to carry out the lifting movements
- » Break down the load into smaller, lighter components for easier handling

Lifting and lowering weight guidelines



Source: safety.networkrail.co.uk

Each box in the diagram shows the suggested maximum weights for lifting and lowering at different heights.

The weights assume that the load is easily grasped with both hands, and the operation takes place in reasonable working conditions with the lifter in stable body position.

Working within the suggested weights will reduce the risk of injury.

Good lifting techniques

Plan the path to take to place the load, avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, remove obstructions along the way, and identify any resting point midway.

- **Lifting Techniques**

1. Adopt a stable position where the feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance
2. Maintain a good hold of the object
3. Start in a good posture at the start of the lift where the back, hips and knees are slightly bent instead of a fully flexing back or fully squatting
4. Don't flex the back backwards while lifting and keep load close to waist and body with the heaviest side of the load next to the body
5. Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways where the shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips
6. Look ahead, not down at the load, once it has been held securely.
7. Move smoothly without jerking the load
8. Don't handle more than can be easily managed
9. Get help if there is difficulty in managing the load
10. Put the load down first, then adjust it into the desired placed position