

16. MANUAL HANDLING

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16.2.1 Aim: To minimise the risk of injury associated with manual handling, particularly of heavy or awkward loads.

16.3.1 Introduction: The incorrect handling of loads causes large numbers of injuries in the workplace resulting in pain, time-off work and sometimes disablement.

16.4.1 Policy: The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended), and associated guidance, require that assessments are made before commencing manual handling operations, so as to reduce the risks of injuries. A form for that purpose may be downloaded from:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/online-resources/risk-assessments>

16.5.1 Safe Manual Handling: Whenever manual handling operations create a risk, the Regulations require that three key steps be taken:

1. Avoid hazardous manual handling whenever reasonably practicable. Consider whether the load must be moved at all. Use mechanical aids to transport whenever possible;
2. Assess any hazardous operation that cannot be avoided and they make a formal risk assessment; and
3. Reduce the risk of injury as far as reasonably practicable. A good risk assessment will not only show whether there is a problem but will also highlight where the problem lies.

16.5.2 A suitable and sufficient risk assessment (see Section 8 of this Safety Manual) is always the starting point for improved control of manual handling operations. These should take into account four factors:

- The load;
- Individual capacity;
- The task and;
- The working environment.

16.5.3 The Load: Consideration should be given to reducing the dimensions of a load (especially its weight). For example, always remove the contents of a filing cabinet

before attempting to move it. Equally, a pallet load of many small individual packages need not be lifted as a single load, but may instead be broken up into smaller loads of two or three packages at a time. The added complications of loads that are unstable, or which contain hazardous substances, or are especially hot or cold, should also be taken into account in respect of the risk assessment and safe systems of work that are formulated. Clues related to the implications for manual handling may be gleaned by looking for and taking into account signage associated with the load:



16.5.4 *Individual Capacity*: Allowances should be made for any known health problems which might have a bearing on the ability of an individual to handle a load in safety. The risk for any person may vary with their age, physical condition and medical circumstances. Each person must be the judge of how much he or she should attempt, and people with a history of a back or joint problems, or any other relevant medical condition, must always exercise extra care. Considerations related to capacity may also include the adequacy of prior information, training, instruction and supervision that have been provided or which are otherwise available.

16.5.5 *The Task*: Consideration should always be given to using manual handling aids, such as a trolley or other similar resources wherever practicable. If the task looks in any way challenging, workers might be wise to seek assistance before attempting even a trial lift, and no-one should attempt to lift a load which is clearly too large, too heavy, or awkward for any one person to manage safely alone. There are ways, such as attempting to slide a load over a short distance by applying gentle pressure using one's foot, that are less likely to result in an injury than simply grabbing and heaving a load without first having safely tested its weight.

16.5.6 *The Working Environment*: There must be adequate room to manoeuvre the load during manual handling operations, and consideration should be given to potentially quite different floor surfaces, temperatures and lighting conditions, for example. Clues related to the implications of environmental conditions for manual handling may be gleaned from signage displayed in workplaces:



16.5.7 Your local Health & Safety Adviser's advice should be sought whenever you are considering handling heavy loads.

16.6.1 Training: On-line training related to manual handling operations safety is available from the University. Specifically, *Cardinus* training packages are available through the University's Health and Safety Department; there are web-based e-learning packages covering the use of display screen equipment, manual handling, home working, and laboratory ergonomics, and all are available at:

<https://health-safety.ed.ac.uk/training/accessing-training/cardinus>

These consist of a variety of training, quiz and risk assessment modules which take users through the fundamental safety aspects of these subjects.

16.6.2 In-person training courses are offered locally, upon request, for those who may be involved routinely and at a practical level in moving and handling operations. Information regarding these courses is available from the H&S Manager for University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus (Contact Lindsay.Murray@ed.ac.uk).

16.7.1 Further information: Detailed information on principles and procedures for safe manual handling appears on the University's Health and Safety web site (and should be consulted):

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/guidance/workplaces-general/manual-handling>

16.7.2 Advice on the safe use of trolleys and gas cylinder transporters may be obtained at a local level from Stores personnel serving University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus.

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