

4.11 Manual Handling

Scope of this chapter

Whilst the Operations Director has overall responsibility for Health and Safety policy, the day to day management and implementation of the policy is delegated through line management, to the individual managers at each location.

Manual handling/lifting does present a significant risk to staff in the social care industry, in response to this Managers need to undertake a risk assessment to determine the likelihood of injury or accident, which are likely to affect those staff under their direction.

The finding of the assessment will need to be shared and discussed with staff.

Should the assessment identify any significant risk; need staff will then need to be given instruction and information about avoiding the risks particular to their situation.

Clearly different branches of the company for example maintenance administrative and residential will encounter differing degrees of risk.

Hazardous lifting operations should be avoided where at all possible.

Where it is not possible to avoid manual handling, it should only commence once, a risk assessment of the task has been carried out on the operation.

A Manual Handling Assessments must be completed locally to define what the particular hazards may be at each location and to inform staff of this potential. Consideration must be given to any activity involving the use of physical energy; this would include restraint/physical intervention.

One way to assess manual handling activities is to look at four specific areas - Task, Individual, Load and Environment (easily remembered by the acronym TILE).

As with any assessment, the staff should be involved in the process, and use should be made of any relevant guidance available for particular industries.

Key factors to consider in each element are:

1. **The Task**

Does the activity involve twisting, stooping, bending, excessive travel, pushing, pulling or precise positioning of the load, sudden movement, inadequate rest or recovery periods, team handling or seated work?

2. **The Individual**

Does the individual require unusual strength or height for the activity, are they pregnant, disabled or suffering from a health problem. Is specialist knowledge or training required?

3. **The Load**

Is the load heavy, unwieldy, difficult to grasp, sharp, hot, cold, difficult to grip, are the contents likely to move or shift?

4. The Environment

Are there space constraints, uneven, slippery or unstable floors, variations in floor levels, extremely hot, cold or humid conditions, poor lighting, poor ventilation, gusty winds, clothing or Personal Protective Equipment that restricts movement?

The findings of the risk assessment should be appropriately recorded and shared with the staff who may be involved in such activity.

Basic principles of manual handling

There are some basic principles that everyone should observe prior to carrying out a manual handling operation:

- Ensure that the object is light enough to lift, is stable and unlikely to shift or move;
- Heavy or awkward loads should be moved using a handling aid;
- Make sure the route is clear of obstructions;
- Make sure there is somewhere to put the load down wherever it is to be moved to;
- Stand as close to the load as possible, and spread your feet to shoulder width;
- Bend your knees and try and keep the back's natural, upright posture;
- Grasp the load firmly as close to the body as you can;
- Use the legs to lift the load in a smooth motion as this offers more leverage reducing the strain on your back;
- Carry the load close to the body with the elbows tucked into the body;
- Avoid twisting the body as much as possible by turning your feet to position yourself with the load.

Handling aids

Mechanical handling aids can reduce the risk of injury when used correctly. Even simple aids such as trolleys, sack trucks and wheelbarrows can be used to move items and reduce the likelihood of injury.

It is better to push rather than pull, and to use body weight and leg muscles to do the work. Make sure the load is kept under control, particularly on slopes.

In some cases more sophisticated manual handling aids may be required.

Cranes, hoists, pallet trucks, conveyors and fork lift trucks are used extensively in many industries to eliminate manual handling.

It should be remembered that, although the handling aids will eliminate many of the manual handling risks, their use will introduce others and these risks must be assessed.

Another consideration is that regulations require that many of these items require a periodic statutory inspection on safety critical components.

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