

# THE MANUAL HANDLING PROCESS

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## **Manual Handling is an Everyday Task for all of us**

Whether you work in a Factory or in an Office environment, you will have to undertake different Manual Handling operations many times a day.

The best way to determine Manual Handling is any transportation or supporting of a load (including lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying, throwing and supporting in a static posture) by hand or bodily force.

Where the effort is applied indirectly, eg. by using a device like a rope or a lever, it is still classed as Manual Handling.

## **Know Your Limits**

When you are faced with a Manual Handling task it is very important that you stop, think and assess what you are about to do. There are some key questions that you should ask:

- What is the load?
- How far has it to be moved?
- Will I need specialist equipment or protection?
- How will the environment affect the task?

## **The Manual Handling Process**

The method in which you manually handle a load is quite simple and is based on a few key points: plan, position, grip, lift, move, lower.

By carrying out a Manual Handling process in the correct way you can help prevent short and long term injury.

## **Common Injuries**

The most common Manual Handling injuries are crushed and fractured limbs, cuts and abrasions, soft tissue damage, hernias and spinal and nerve injuries.

Any of these injuries could occur at any time and be acute or chronic in nature.

## **The Load**

Is it difficult to grasp? The Load may be oddly shaped or have sharp edges.

Can I lighten the load? Can it be split into smaller, lighter loads making handling easier and safer?

Could more than one person lift it? It is possible to lift in teams, but you must be aware of everybody's lifting capabilities and communicate clearly before and during the lift.

## **How far has it to be moved?**

How far am I expected to move the load? The further that I have to manually handle the load, the smaller the load should be.

Is it possible to use a mechanical aid? If you have to move a load any distance, think about using a trolley, barrow, truck or trailer any time you need.



## **The Manual Handling Process**

Is the environment around you safe? Are you physically able to lift the load?

If you think at the start of the lift that the load is too heavy don't continue.

## **Never Rush with the Load**

When you are carrying a load, be vigilant and aware of your surroundings.

Always be alert to any possible dangers. If you begin to feel tired or strained, take a rest.

## **Pushing**

If you have been using a Manual Handling aid, make sure that it has been returned to its safe storage area.

The reason for this is, if you leave a truck or a trolley lying around, it may become a hazard itself.

Or, even worse, anyone expecting to use an aid and finding it not there may be tempted to undertake unsafe handling and we all know where that could lead.

## **The Pallet Truck**

This is used to lift and move pallets up to 1 tonne in weight. You need specific training to use a pallet truck.

When pushing the pallet truck, use the power in your legs and push off in an even and controlled manner.

Once you're moving maintain a steady speed and again, you should have assessed your route for hazards before you started.

When you reach your drop-off point, stop smoothly, again no jerking. But maintain your head in a safe, stable position.

Carry out unloading in the same safe way as you would load your trolley or truck.

## **Pulling the Pallet Truck**

The dangers of pulling a load are injury to your back through straining or twisting.

Your body is being used in an unnatural way. There's a danger of the load coming forward and injuring you.

Pulling a load is not as controllable or safe as pushing. If you're pushing and the load goes out of control, it will go away from you, but if you're pulling, it can run over you.

If you find that you have to pull a load, maintain a straight back, grip the trolley/truck firmly and take the weight of the load.

Using the power from your legs, start the movement slowly and smoothly, and in a controlled manner.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable, stop and reassess the situation. You may need to lighten the load or get help.

## **Pulling**

Pulling is the least acceptable way of moving a load, but sometimes it's just unavoidable.

If you find yourself in a situation where you have to pull a load, make sure you take great care.

## **Remember**

Manual Handling is not just about lifting heavy loads. You can increase the risk of injury through pushing and pulling too.

Most of the time we don't actually think about the risks and damage that we could bring to ourselves through Manual Handling.

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