

Manual handling



Moving loads by hand is a common enough task in many workplaces, but it is not without risk to those involved. Typical injuries include sprains, strains, cuts and even fractures.

Frequently, the term 'manual handling' is used to describe the transporting or supporting of loads by hand or the use of bodily force. This includes lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving loads.

The types of loads handled can vary widely. Examples include boxes; bulky or unwieldy furniture (such as chairs, benches etc.); audio visual equipment; people and so on.

Legal requirements

Generally, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care.

If you are an employer, you must also comply with the Manual Handling Operations Regulations. These require employers to:

- Avoid hazardous manual handling tasks so far as is reasonably practicable
- Make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of any hazardous task that cannot be avoided
- Implement adequate precautions that reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable
- Provide certain information to employees.

Risk advice line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

Other regulations might also apply in some circumstances. For example, where equipment (such as a trolley) is provided to reduce the risk of injury, the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations would also apply to the safe use of that equipment.

Hazards to look out for

Some of the typical hazards include:

- Tasks that involve long carrying distances and strenuous pushing or pulling
- Loads that are heavy or bulky; difficult to grasp; unstable; or harmful (for example, sharp or hot)
- Locations that restrict posture; have floors that are bumpy, obstructed, slippery or have variations in levels; or are poorly lit
- Tasks that require unusual capability (that is, above-average strength or agility); endanger those with a health problem or learning/physical disability; or are a danger to pregnant women
- Unsuitable or defective handling aids and equipment (for example, shelf trolley, mop bucket etc.)
- People who may be more prone to injury (e.g. they have a history of back trouble, are pregnant or elderly)*.

Precautions you can take

Some of the typical precautions include:

- Using a suitable lifting aid (for example, a trolley) that is properly maintained
- Avoiding lifting from floor level or above shoulder height, especially heavy loads
- Reducing carrying distances
- Making the load smaller or lighter and easier to lift
- Stacking boxes or other loads evenly
- Removing obstructions to free movement
- Avoiding steps and steep ramps
- Improving lighting
- Using a couple of pairs of hands
- Providing information and training
- Checking individual capability to ensure those more prone to injury do not move things that could put them at increased risk of harm
- Providing personal protective equipment (for example, gloves)*.

*This list is not exhaustive.

Making a start

Action

1. **Identify circumstances where manual handling is required and decide if there is a risk of injury.**

Make a note of these.

2. **Check the precautions you have taken are adequate. If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed.**

Make a note of the precautions in place and/or any additional ones that might be required.

Also, note who will be responsible for taking them.

Guidance

In deciding if there is a risk of injury, you can look out for the hazards identified above. However, this list is not exhaustive and you may need to consider others that reflect your own particular circumstances.

If you are an employer, you will need to complete formal risk assessments. These should help you identify where manual handling is hazardous and decide if these tasks can be avoided altogether.

If this is not possible for particularly hazardous tasks, you will need to complete more specific risk assessments. With the wide range of manual handling tasks that might be undertaken, deciding when to complete these can be difficult. However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has provided simple numerical guidelines to help identify where these are necessary.

Your assessments will need to meet certain requirements. For example they will need to be in writing if you have more than five employees and revised appropriately when circumstances change. They will also have to consider:

- All of the types of manual handling tasks carried out by employees
- The risk factors and associated questions (as set out in Manual Handling Operations Regulations). These include the task; the load; the working environment, individual capability and other factors (e.g. movement or posture hindered by the use of protective clothing).

Further guidance and resources are available at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/manual.htm> in particular the leaflet 'Manual handling at work: A brief guide', INDG143.

Risk assessments must be completed by someone who is competent. If using a health and safety consultant, check that they are registered on the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OHSCR). Further information is available at www.oshcr.org.

Again, where you have completed formal risk assessments, these will do this for you. They will also provide a useful record of the steps you have taken to identify any necessary precautions.

Obviously, if you can avoid moving the load by hand in the first place or use a handling aid (such as a trolley) this will reduce the risk considerably. Failing this, implementing some of the precautions outlined above will help prevent injuries.

Making a start

Action

3. Ensure that the precautions you have identified are taken and remain effective.

Make a note of any checks or inspections you make to ensure these precautions are being taken or equipment remains safe.

Guidance

Typical precautions are set out above.

One precaution commonly used is the provision of manual handling aids (such as sack trucks, flatbed trolleys or shelf trolleys). Clearly, these need to be suitable (i.e. strong and robust enough) for their intended use.

In many circumstances this equipment is quite low-tech, being basic in design. Despite this, it should still be properly checked and maintained in accordance with any manufacturer's instructions provided. Where defects are identified, these should be repaired, particularly damage to wheels or the handling mechanism.

In developing suitable precautions, you should consult with your employees on what might be required and workable.

4. Ensure that employees (and volunteers in these circumstances) know how to use any equipment provided or how to lift safely.

Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.

The level of information and training required will vary depending on the tasks involved and reflect your particular circumstances. If you have completed formal risk assessments, these will help you determine what is necessary.

For many manual handling tasks, making sure employees and volunteers receive simple instruction on how to lift correctly or use any handling aids properly would be sufficient.

Where manual handling tasks are more frequent, hazardous, or there are more employees involved, you may have to provide formal training and information. This should be delivered by someone who is competent, reflecting the particular risks in your organisation. The HSE broadly outlines what might be required at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/training.htm>.

All persons required to inspect, repair and maintain equipment should also be provided with appropriate training and information. You should keep records of any information or training you provide. These should contain detail relating to the persons who were trained (including their signatures to say that they have received and understood the training); when they were trained and by whom; an overview of the training that was provided etc.

5. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for preventing injury from manual handling tasks.

Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.

Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above.

If you need to prepare a health and safety policy, you could record your arrangements as part of it.

In the event of a claim, paperwork will be important so you should retain appropriate records. This could include any records of accidents or their investigation; risk assessments; training records etc.

Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available on our [website](#).

Further guidance and resources are also available from the Food Standards Agency at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/index.htm>.

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our risk advice line on **0345 600 7531** (Monday to Friday 9am -5pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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