



Part VII - Manual Handling Operations

Guidance on manual handling operations cannot & will not simply determine what is the safe load limit for an individual. Back injuries and pain can be and are caused by a number of factors rather than simply just the load alone. The repetitiveness and duration of the operation, the separation of the load from the operator's body, the size of the load, the distance carried, the physical condition of the individual etc. all contribute to risks associated with manual handling operations.

Most guidance tends to assist an employer or a supervisor by adopting a risk assessment approach to address the manual handling operations in a systematic and scientific manner.

The Regulation calls for positive steps & measures to be taken by an employer to ensure that manual handling operations are taken care of in a systematic & pro-active manner by adopting a risk assessment approach so as to ensure the health & safety of the operators. Records for the results of such risk assessments are required to be made available for the inspection of the Labour Department Officials.

Heads of the Department are required to ensure that preliminary assessments have been carried out by a trained person before a manual handling operation of the Department begins and that further assessments are carried out when changes have taken place subsequent to an earlier assessment. The preliminary assessment is meant to evaluate whether a manual handling operation will cause health & safety risks.

1. Action Plans for Manual Handling Operations

- 1.1. It is advisable to appoint a person in the Department to assist the Head in addressing Manual Handling Operations matters.
- 1.2. Ensure that adequate training is provided to such person and to the risk assessors.
- 1.3. The Department Head is required to instigate a programme to ensure that measures are taken to evaluate and address the health & safety risks of all the manual handling operations which are found to have health & safety risks after preliminary assessment by
 - (a) assessing the level of the risk and the number of persons being affected,
 - (b) critically examining the need for manual handling operations,
 - (c) redesigning the manual handling operations, reducing the requirement for manual handling operations,
 - (d) reducing the load,

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- (e) applying mechanical aids,
- (f) providing training for the operators on proper manual handling skills and knowledge,
- (g) appointing a supervisor for the operations and providing the required training,
- (h) ensuring compliance by performing regular monitoring,
- (i) examining the physical fitness and suitability of the operators.

1.4. The programme instigated in (1.3) above shall ensure that mitigatory measures to eliminate or reduce the health & safety risks are in place and undertaken.

2. Risk Assessment

The Labour Department has produced a "[Guide to Manual Handling Operations](#)". The checklist in the Guide offers adequate guidance to carry out the risk assessment. Appendix I to V of the Guide can be adopted for completing the risk assessment. Training courses on manual handling risk assessments are available from training providers like OSH Council.

3. Training

The Labour Department & the Occupational Safety Health Council run courses for operators & labourers in manual handling operations as well as courses for the competent persons who are required to be appointed to ensure manual handling operations safety. Departments are to ensure that adequate training is provided to the competent persons and operators.

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