



Manual Handling

Over one third of reportable injuries in the UK are caused by manual handling. Manual Handling can also be a contributory factor in slip/trip, fall from height and other accident types. Uncontrolled manual handling can lead to a wide spectrum of musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), including back pain and work related upper limb disorders (WRULDs) ranging in symptoms & severity. Injury and ill-health can arise due to over-exertion, cumulative damage and acute accidental injury. MSD are a major cause of accidents and ill health and remain a significant cause of civil claims. The HSC have targeted MSD as a priority programme.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

1. Risks from manual handling activities are identified and assessed (i.e. risk assessment).
2. A hierarchical and 'risk based' approach is adopted to avoid and reduce the risks from manual handling activities.
3. Manual handling training needs are assessed, addressed, and incorporated as part of a documented safe system of work. This will include training in the use of handling aids and equipment provided for high risk tasks.
4. Employees and safety representatives are consulted and participate in the risk assessment process, selection of controls and subsequent reviews.
5. Systems are in place for the early reporting and investigation of injuries related to suspected causative work activities.
6. Facilities exist, normally via an occupational health provider and nominated case manager, to manage employees appropriately and safely when returning to work.

BEST PRACTISE

- A selection of measurable indicators is used to quantify the impact of manual handling related exposure accurately and to build a business case for action.
- A risk based action plan is developed to focus on key areas of exposure, including:-
 - Analysis of accident & claims data to determine causation & location trends.
 - Analysis of absence data to identify whether MSD absence is work related, determine root cause, and measure severity.
- Manual handling concerns are incorporated within a structured approach to identifying MSD risk factors e.g. using HSE's risk assessment filter.
- Work systems are engineered to avoid the need for manual handling or to reduce risk. This requires involvement at capex project & process modification stage.
- Work systems are assessed using ergonomic principles, either in house or by third party specialists. Interventions are systematically applied to work systems/employees.
- Manual Handling training is task specific and part of, or in accordance with, a documented safe system of working. Correct application of training is validated at suitable intervals.
- A system is in place which takes into account employees fitness, health and capability when matching them to the tasks they are asked to perform e.g. functional capacity evaluation (FCE) via an occupational health provider.
- Case management & rehabilitation procedures are applied following any accident.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Manual Handling Operations Regs 1992 are the main, but not exclusive, provision requiring employers to avoid the need for employees to undertake manual handling operations. Where this is not practical or possible, then employers are required to carry out a risk assessment taking into account the load, individual, task and environment, and introduce controls as to minimise the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

GUIDANCE & USEFUL INFORMATION

- HSE Website: MSD / Manual Handling Pages: www.hse.gov.uk/msd/
- QBE Issues Forum: Musculoskeletal Disorders (November 2005)
- QBE Issues Forum: Rehabilitation and Active Case Management for MSD (May 2007)

For further information contact RM@UK.qbe.com