

Controlling the risks from manual handling

A seven-stage approach to controlling risks from musculoskeletal disorders

- 1 Understand the issues and commit to action**
 - Are the risks from manual handling recognised in your workplace?
 - Is management committed to preventing or minimising these risks?
 - Are there adequate management systems or policies to support the commitment?
- 2 Create the right organisational environment**
 - Is worker participation actively sought and valued, for example is there active participation in risk assessment, selection of controls and subsequent reviews?
 - Are safety representatives involved?
 - Are all departments aware of the contributions they can make?
 - Is competence ensured?
 - Have you allocated responsibilities?
- 3 Assess the risks from manual handling in your workplace**
 - Are manual handling risk factors present, for example twisting, stooping, reaching, carrying heavy loads, slippery floors?
- 4 Avoid or, where this is not possible, reduce the risks from manual handling**
 - Have you used an ergonomic approach?
 - Have you looked for 'higher order' solutions, ie can you avoid the manual handling altogether? If not, can you, for example, mechanise/automate, provide handling aids, reduce the weight of the load?
 - Have you prioritised your actions to control the risks from manual handling?
 - Have you implemented solutions?
 - Have you reviewed their effectiveness?
- 5 Educate, inform and consult your workforce**
 - Have you consulted safety representatives/other workers and involved them in the risk assessment process?
 - Have you educated and informed your workforce to enable them to play an active part in controlling risk?
 - What steps have you taken to ensure that training reinforces safe working practices and control measures?
- 6 Manage any case of manual handling injury**
 - Have you implemented and supported a system for early reporting of manual handling injuries and investigating which work activities could be linked with the symptoms?
 - Do you actively look for symptoms of manual handling injury?
 - Have you arranged for occupational health provision?
 - Do you have systems in place for employees returning to work after having a manual handling injury, including a review of the risk assessment in light of their individual needs?
- 7 Carry out regular checks on programme effectiveness**
 - Do you have systems in place to monitor and review your controls for reducing the risks from manual handling?
 - Do you have systems in place to monitor and review your manual handling management programme?
 - Are you aware of new developments/information?
 - Do you aim for continuous improvement?

Further information

Further information is contained in *Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended). Guidance on Regulations L23* (Third edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 0 7176 2823 X

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