

Reducing manual handling risks in carpet retail



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Introduction

This guidance is about the risk of manual handling injury in carpet retail. It is aimed at manufacturers, delivery staff and carpet retailers. It includes examples of risk assessments which can be used to help identify and reduce the risk of manual handling injury to drivers when delivering carpets.

Causes of manual handling injuries

Manual handling problems often come from poor workplace or job design. Hazardous activities include:

- lifting heavy or awkward loads;
- using excessive force;
- repeated handling of heavy loads;
- poor posture and twisting when handling loads;
- handling loads in poor working environments.

Legal duties

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (see Further reading) identify a clear hierarchy of control measures:

- avoid the need for hazardous manual handling so far as is reasonably practicable;
- assess the risk of injury from any hazardous handling operations that cannot be avoided;
- reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling so far as is reasonably practicable.

The regulations cover transporting or supporting a load by hand or by bodily force. This means that any potentially hazardous manual handling activities carried out by carpet delivery and retail employees require a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and the manual handling risks to be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable (see www.hse.gov.uk/risk/faq.htm). This will also apply to other goods, eg underlay, vinyl, and wooden and laminate flooring.

Most common manual handling risks

Some of the most common manual handling risks for delivery drivers and retail employees involve moving carpets from:

- the manufacturer's premises to the delivery vehicle;
- the delivery vehicle to the retailer's premises, including:
 - location and access;
 - the size of the retail premises;
 - badly organised retail storage areas.

Moving stock between the manufacturer's store and the delivery vehicle

Most manufacturers have a forklift or pallet truck with a boom attachment, eliminating the need for employees to manually handle carpets in the warehouse and to the delivery vehicle. Trucks and booms must have a periodic thorough examination, under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) (see www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/loler.htm).



Figure 1 Boom attachment to handle carpets



Figure 2 Pedestrian-powered truck with boom attachment

To eliminate additional handling:

- consider loading in delivery sequence, making sure the last carpet rolls to be delivered are loaded first;
- plan how to deal with any last minute orders and returns, eg have an allocated space for returns in the vehicle;
- allow enough space in the vehicle for the winch to be used, particularly if it is needed for one of the first deliveries.

Delivery to retailers

Access to premises

Manufacturers should have a system for dealing with deliveries to retailers, to prevent drivers undertaking hazardous manual handling activities, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- Consider involving the sales manager and/or health and safety manager. If there are issues with access, a visit to the premises may be helpful to discuss and agree different options, eg delivery to another site.

- Some manufacturers train their delivery drivers to carry out their own site-specific dynamic risk assessments (see an example of a dynamic risk assessment (DRA) for delivery on page 8).

Drivers can face difficulties when delivering to retailers on the high street, including:

- danger to pedestrians;
- other deliveries at the same time, cars parked in the way, or heavy traffic flow causing a collision hazard;
- obstructions, eg skips, or other items obstructing access;
- parking restrictions, eg no-parking signs or double yellow lines;
- narrow one-way streets, preventing other vehicles passing the parked delivery vehicle. The driver may feel under pressure to unload the vehicle quickly, which could increase the risk of a manual handling injury;
- having to park some distance away and manually handle the carpet to the retailer;
- negotiating kerbs and steps at the front entrance if there is no access to a delivery area. Unless the store has a ramp, a trolley would be difficult to use;
- potholes, uneven surfaces and steps adding to the problems of manoeuvring a heavy carpet roll on a carpet trolley.

Providing drivers with traffic cones can help when they are manually handling carpets from the back of the vehicle where parking is restricted. Avoid obstructing access routes and make sure cones are not placed beyond the width of the vehicle.

Retail storage areas

Retailers have a duty under health and safety law to ensure the health and safety of their own employees and of people making deliveries at their premises. Delivery drivers will often come across storage areas that are difficult to access and badly organised.

Retailers should make sure:

- access to their storage areas is free from obstructions and trip hazards;
- when drivers enter the storage area they know where the carpet is to be stored;
- the storage area is well organised and free from clutter to allow safe handling of carpet rolls;
- there is clear space within the storage area to allow the use of manual handling lifting aids, eg sack trucks and trolleys.

Retail staff

The manual handling risk to the driver can increase if, eg:

- retailers have employees who find it difficult to manually handle the carpets;
- they have to deliver to retail premises or residential garages where there is no one available to help and no handling aids are available.

Manufacturers should check that retailers have the appropriate handling aids to help reduce the risk of manual handling injury to the driver. Look at the HSL research report *Typical manual handling activities performed in retail carpet stores: The risks, and how to reduce them* (see Further reading) for some examples of handling aids that are used in the industry.

Smaller retailers

Smaller retailers, where the use of handling aids larger than carpet buggies may be impracticable, could consider simple risk-reduction measures such as:

- arranging for carpet fitters (usually subcontracted) to be there to help when deliveries arrive;
- purchasing carpets already cut to size;
- reducing the amount of stock stored in the premises, eg by using sample books at the shop.

Risk assessments for delivery drivers

Two methods of assessing risks from injury when delivering carpets and control measures to reduce those risks have been developed by members of the Carpet Foundation: a comprehensive delivery point safety assessment checklist and a dynamic risk assessment. Completing the forms is not a legal requirement, but you may find them helpful.

Delivery point safety assessment checklist

This can be completed by manufacturers in conjunction with retailers and/or by sales representatives when visiting retailers. When making your assessment:

- assess all premises that have carpet deliveries, including a retailer's shop, or separate storage facilities;
- consider how to reduce the manual handling risks associated with the driver delivering the loads without help in unstaffed premises;
- include the provision of adequate lifting and handling aids;
- prioritise the measures you plan to take with the most effective risk reductions listed first.

The checklist is divided into five key areas that present the most risk for manual handling:

- vehicle access to the retail delivery point;
- access to retail storage areas;
- floor surface;
- storage areas;
- assistance.

When completing the checklist:

- for each section, identify the statement that best fits the situation being assessed and put the score in the box provided;
- if the situation falls between two categories, use an intermediate score;
- record the score and colour band for each section on the results table at the end of the risk assessment (ie green, amber, red, purple);
- add the scores from each section to get a total score;
- check the results interpretation table for suggested actions, depending on the total score.

The colour band identifies which area presents the most risk. Green represents a **very good** site where no action is required; amber represents a **good** site where a more detailed review of delivery methods may be required; red represents an **average or below average** site where a prompt review of delivery methods is recommended; purple represents a **poor** site where an urgent review of delivery methods to reduce the risk from manual handling is recommended.

Delivery point checklist

Vehicle access to retail delivery point

The delivery point is separated from public access (eg the delivery vehicle can park in a specified bay and there is enough space to use a boom truck).	0
The vehicle can park off the main road, in a specified area, less than 20 m from the delivery door and a trolley is used; or the carpet is manually carried less than 10 m.*	1
The vehicle has to park more than 20 m from the premises and a trolley is used; or the carpet is manually carried more than 10 m.*	3
Making the delivery involves crossing a busy road with the carpet.	5
Score	

Access to retail storage areas

There is a clear, well-lit route wide enough to transport the carpet to the storage area using a trolley. This is kept clear at all times.	0
There is occasionally insufficient space along the route to the storage area (eg due to previous deliveries), but the retailer can clear these easily when the carpet is delivered; or , the trolley is pushed less than 20 m or the carpet is manually carried less than 10 m.*	1
There is insufficient space most of the time along the route to the storage area (eg due to previous deliveries), but the retailer can clear these with considerable effort when the carpet is delivered; or , the trolley is pushed more than 20 m or the carpet is manually carried more than 10 m.*	3
There is insufficient space all the time along the route to the storage area (eg due to previous deliveries, doors that are not wide enough for a trolley to be used, there are sharp angles to turn through etc).	5
Score	

Floor surface

Dry and clean, in good condition, non-slipping and level.	0
Dry but slippery or visibly sloping.	1
Contaminated/wet, or steep sloping floor, or unstable footing.	2
There are changes in level that need to be negotiated (eg kerbs, steps, steep ramps or slopes etc).	3
Score	

* Avoid manually carrying carpets wherever possible.

Storage areas

A boom truck can be used to take the carpet directly from the delivery vehicle and put it in the racking.	0
Racking is installed and there is sufficient space for the carpet to be loaded by hand; or there is sufficient floor space for the carpet to be placed without the need to be stored on top of other deliveries.	2
The floor storage is readily accessible, but occasionally the carpet may have to be stored on top of other deliveries.	3
Storage areas have limited space, making it difficult for the delivery to be made all the time.	5
Score	

Assistance

The premises are arranged so carpets never have to be handled manually and assistance is not required (eg there is a boom truck).	0
Assistance with the delivery is needed occasionally but there is always appropriate assistance from members of retail staff.	1
Assistance with the delivery is needed most of the time, but appropriate assistance is available if the retailer is given advance notice.	2
Assistance from the retailer is not available, but the delivery can be made if it is not taken to the storage area.	4
Assistance from the retailer is not provided and it is considered unsafe to make the delivery. The carpet has to be returned to the manufacturer, and access to the other carpet rolls is obstructed.	5
Score	

Results

Add in the scores and colour band from the five sections in the table below:

Section	Numerical score	Colour band (G, A, R, P)
Vehicle access to retail delivery point		
Access to retail storage areas		
Floor surface		
Storage areas		
Assistance		
Total score		

Interpretation of the results

Using the total score, review the table below for interpretation and action required.

Score	Result	Action required
<5	Very good	No action required
6–12	Good	Delivery methods may need to be reviewed in more detail
13–18	Average to below average	Prompt review of delivery methods recommended
19+	Poor	Urgent review of delivery methods recommended

This score should only act as a guide. If any individual section scores a 'red' or 'purple' then an urgent review of the delivery process will be required.

Dynamic risk assessment (DRA)

A dynamic risk assessment form (see page 8) can be completed by drivers (who have been trained in how to complete them) if they arrive at premises where there are unexpected hazards not identified by the manufacturer's generic risk assessment. It is divided into two sections:

- **type of hazard identified** with an initial risk rating (high, medium, or low);
- **control measures**, where the remaining risk is assessed (high, medium, or low).

Where possible, the control measures to reduce the risks should be actioned to make the delivery.

Point 4 at the bottom of the DRA recommends drivers should contact their line manager when the risk is high and the control measures cannot be applied. This could mean amending the delivery, or possibly abandoning it, depending on the severity of the manual handling risk. Consider alternative arrangements for future deliveries.

Example of a dynamic risk assessment (DRA) for delivery

DRA: Delivery Complete at any site that has specific hazards not covered in the manufacturer's 'generic risk assessment' for delivery									
Description of works									
Work location									
x	Type of hazard identified	Initial risk rating			Control measures	Remaining risk rating			Complete x
		High	Med	Low		High	Med	Low	
	Site-specific hazards								
1	Parking on busy roads with collision hazards	H	M	L	New parking area/high-visibility jacket/warning lights	H	M	L	
2	No vehicle turning area with collision hazard	H	M	L	Do not enter/walk route first/use banksman if available	H	M	L	
3	Reversing required with no alternative	H	M	L	Walk route/banksman/camera/reversing sound beacon on	H	M	L	
4	Over size kerb/obstructions/poor visibility on entry to premises unload area	H	M	L	Walk the route before entry/alternative route in/carpet trolley	H	M	L	
5	Vehicle height/weight/width limit due to road type/parking site	H	M	L	Check with base before departure	H	M	L	
6	Cleanliness/housekeeping hazard	H	M	L	Clear/alternative area/note state and report	H	M	L	
7	Kerbs/obstructions/reduced space	H	M	L	Clear/trolley/helper/alternative area/ring in	H	M	L	
	Driver-specific hazards								
8	Other forklift truck activity in unload area	H	M	L	Stay in cab/use pedestrian route/verbal warning of presence/PPE/don't enter	H	M	L	
9	Collision with forklift truck/boom	H	M	L	Pedestrian-vehicle segregate/high-visibility PPE/awareness training	H	M	L	
10	Slip, trip or fall. Same level	H	M	L	Clear working area/move hazard/avoid area	H	M	L	
11	Slip, trip or fall from height	H	M	L	Handles/steps/boom/winch/refuse to climb	H	M	L	
12	Roll weight (hazard) too great with injury risk	H	M	L	Assistance/winch/trolley/ring in/return roll	H	M	L	
	Lone driver hazards								
13	Delivery into unmanned storage	H	M	L	Contact client/assist/ring on arrival/departure	H	M	L	
14	Inadequate lighting	H	M	L	Light required/ring for client assistance	H	M	L	
15	Climb stairway with trip/fall/slip hazard	H	M	L	Assistance/PPE/trolley/ring in/refusal	H	M	L	
16	Awkward layout causing poor manual handling position issues	H	M	L	Clear/trolley/assistance/alternative area/ring in	H	M	L	
17	Set-down area blocked by other rolls	H	M	L	Alternative set-down area/report to base/await assistance/abort drop	H	M	L	
	Detail of hazard found				Follow-up action required as a result of your observation on site				

Risk assessment completed by:

Print name
Signature
Date.....

- 1 For hazards identified put an **x** in the left hand column. Consider if the level of risk is High, Medium or Low and circle **H, M or L**.
- 2 Act on the control measures to reduce or remove the risks and put an **x** in the right-hand box to confirm the measures have been applied. Identify new residual level of risk to either medium or low and circle **M or L** as appropriate.
- 3 A DRA is flexible so, as job circumstances change, carry out a new assessment to highlight changes to the risk.
- 4 If the risk is high and the control measures cannot be applied or are considered ineffective, work cannot proceed. Contact your line manager for advice.

Further reading

Making the best use of lifting and handling aids: A brief guide Leaflet INDG398(rev1)
HSE Books 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg398.htm

Manual handling at work: A brief guide Leaflet INDG143(rev3) HSE Books 2012
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.htm

*Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended).
Guidance on Regulations L23* (Third edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 978 0 7176
2823 0 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l23.htm

Manual handling assessment charts (the MAC tool) Leaflet INDG383(rev2) HSE
Books 2014 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg383.htm

*Typical manual handling activities performed in retail carpet stores:
The risks, and how to reduce them* Report HSU2007/19 HSE 2007
www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl_pdf/2007/hsl0719.pdf

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

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This leaflet is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg439.htm.

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