

# **Manual Handling**

## **Definition**

**Manual Handling** is defined as the movement of a load by human effort alone. Manual handling may involve transportation of the load or direct support of load including pushing, pulling, carrying, moving using bodily force and straightforward lifting. Back injuries due to lifting of heavy loads are very common and several million working days are lost each year as a result.

## **Typical Manual Handling Hazards include:**

- Lifting a load which is too heavy or too cumbersome resulting in back injury.
- Poor posture during lifting or poor lifting technique resulting in back injury.
- Dropping a load, resulting in foot injury.
- Lifting sharp-edged or hot loads resulting in hand injuries.

## **Most common injuries associated with poor manual handling techniques are musculoskeletal in nature and are:**

- Muscular sprains & strains-caused when muscular tissue is stretched beyond normal capability leading to weakening, bruising and painful inflammation of area affected.
- Such injuries normally occur in back, arms and wrists.
- Back injuries – include injuries to disc situated between spinal vertebrae.
- Trapped nerve – usually occurring in back due to another injury but aggravated by manual handling.

## **Manual Handling Assessment**

### **The Task**

- Is the load held or manipulated at a distance from the trunk?
- Is a satisfactory body posture being adopted?
- Are there excessive distances to carry or lift the load?
- Are there excessive pulling and pushing of the load?
- Are the loads transported to different levels?
- Is the floor surface even?
- Is the load unstable?
- Is there a risk or prolonged physical effort required?
- Are there sufficient rest or recovery periods?
- Is there an imposed rate of work on the task?
- Are the loads being handled while the individual is seated?
- Does the handling involve two or more people?

## **The Environment**

- The working environment in which manual operation is to take place, must be considered during assessment.
- The following areas will need to be assessed.
- Any space constraints which might inhibit good posture.
- Such constraints include lack of headroom, narrow walkways and items of furniture.
- Slippery, uneven or unstable floors,
- Variations in levels of floors or work surfaces, possibly requiring the use of ladders.
- Extremes of temperature and humidity
- Ventilation problems or gusts of wind.
- Poor lighting conditions.

## **The Individual**

- The capability of the individual to lift or carry the load must be assessed.
- Does task require unusual characteristics of individual?
- Are employees who might reasonably be considered to be pregnant or have a health problem, put at risk by task?
- Assessment is reviewed if there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change to manual handling operations to which it relates.
- Plan the route, the lift and the set down point
- Position your feet – bent knees, straight back.
- Firm grip, lift smoothly,
- Move the feet – do not twist body,
- Keep the load close to the body,
- Put down smoothly – then adjust for final position.