



Manual tasks

On average, workers with injuries from manual tasks take the longest time to recover and return to work. Jobs involving physical stress or repetitive movements have the highest rates of injuries, with over half the lost time injuries involving nurses, health care workers, cleaners, packers and store persons. While low force, repetitive actions and sustained awkward postures can cause injury to workers, lifting is responsible for a high percentage of injuries.

The weight of an object is only one of many factors to consider in avoiding injuries. Other things to take into account include whether the load needs to be lifted at all, whether equipment can be used to assist, and how often and how quickly a task is performed.

Injuries can be the result of gradual wear and tear from frequent or prolonged tasks, or sudden damage from a single lift of something very heavy or awkward.

safety checklist

Check	yes	no	n/a
Hazard identification and risk assessment			
Have you identified manual tasks that may cause injury?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have manual task risk assessments been adequately conducted? The assessments need to consider all the relevant risk factors ¹ .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigation of incidents, injuries and hazards			
Have all reported manual tasks incidents, injuries and hazards been adequately investigated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have outcomes of investigations (if any) been reported to the person who raised the hazard within a reasonable timeframe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are control measures to reduce the risk of injuries reviewed after accidents have occurred?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of risk controls			
Have control measures been put in place and maintained to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with hazardous manual tasks as far as possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the implemented controls taken into account 'sources of risk' ² and relevant 'risk factors'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ **Risk factors** are factors that may make a manual task more hazardous, particularly for the development of musculoskeletal disorders. There are **'direct risk factors'** ie those that have a direct effect on the body (eg actions and postures) and **'indirect risk factors'** (ie those that make a task more difficult to perform (eg the working environment and systems of work)).

² Hazardous manual task risk factors may stem from various sources. Addressing the **'sources of risk'** is the most effective way of controlling the risks. These can be varied and include things like 'work area design and layout' and the 'nature of the load' (eg a heavy load).

For more information on **'risk factors'** and **'sources of risk'** and the risk management approach for manual tasks, see the *Code of practice: Manual tasks* at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Information, instruction and training			
Have people involved in organising, implementing and performing manual tasks been provided with adequate instruction and training? The training program needs to cover relevant risk factors and the risk management approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have workers who perform hazardous manual tasks received task-specific training during induction, and when their work tasks change?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are workers aware of procedures for reporting hazardous manual tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have workers been asked for suggestions on safer ways to complete manual tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe work procedures			
Have equipment, layout and work organisation been considered to minimise the risk of injury from performing manual tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have lifting or carrying heavy loads been eliminated or minimised by changing systems (eg mechanisation) or using different equipment (eg mechanical lifts and trolleys)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has it been ensured that items that are heavy or frequently accessed are not placed above shoulder height or below mid-thigh height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is adequate space provided for areas where manual tasks are performed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are jobs and tasks organised so that workers have adequate breaks from sustained postures, repetitive movement and manual handling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other sources of information

WorkSafe www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Legislation

- The Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

Code of practice

- Manual tasks

Video

- Manual tasks

Training package

- Manual tasks training package – presenter’s guide
- Power point presentation

Worksheets

- Manual tasks incident investigation
- Manual tasks risk management tool

Bulletins

- Manual handling in the tyre industry
- Manual tasks in the liquor retail industry
- Manual handling: café and retail industry

Publication

- Manual tasks guide for carers

Information

- Manual handling – cafes and restaurants
- Manual handling – building and construction industry
- Manual handling in the meat industry
- Manual handling moving trolleys
- Manual handling stacking shelves
- Manual handling stacking cartons on pallets
- Manual handling drum handling
- Manual tasks: guide for carers
- Manual tasks in supermarkets
- Manual tasks in supermarkets project
- Manual handling in the retail industry
- Manual handling in the tyre industry

Information and checklists

- Manual tasks in supermarkets

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