



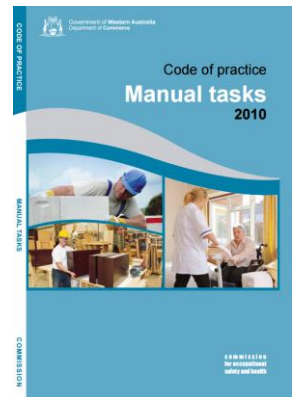
Introduction

WorkSafe is conducting a proactive inspection campaign focusing on manual tasks in supermarkets and grocery stores, with a view to reducing injuries within the industry. The campaign will involve WorkSafe inspectors visiting stores to identify manual task and other safety and health risks and provide employers with information on how to comply with occupational safety and health requirements.

This newsletter has been developed to provide information on how to best to identify and manage the risks to minimise workplace injuries and comply with occupational safety and health legislation and should be read in conjunction with the [Code of practice Manual tasks](#) (the *Code*).

Hazardous manual tasks are the most common cause of workplace injury, accounting for almost 40% of all lost time injuries in most industries. To reduce the risk of injury there are 2 things you need to understand:

1. It is not just the weight of the objects handled that creates the risk of injury. There are a number of other factors (referred to as risk factors in the Code) that increase the risk. These include the actions and postures involved and how long, how fast and how frequently to objects are handled. So lots of things can increase the risk. But sometimes these things have simple solutions and lots of simple solutions can add up to a big decrease in risk
2. Manual task related injuries can occur from performing a single task (e.g. lifting and twisting while moving a side of beef). But the most common injuries are those from gradual wear and tear from performing a range of manual tasks over time.



So to manage hazardous manual tasks risk requires a systematic approach of identification assessment and control. This is explained in detail in the Code.

What are manual tasks?

Manual tasks refer to any activity that requires a person to use their physical body (musculoskeletal system) to perform work. It includes manual handling (the use of force in lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying or otherwise moving, holding or restraining any person, animal or thing); repetitive actions; adopting awkward or sustained postures and tasks that expose workers to vibration.

Risks of harm and injury

What injuries can result from manual tasks?

Most jobs require several types of manual tasks to be performed. The most common workplace injuries linked to manual tasks include sprains, strains, hernias and disc injuries to the spine.

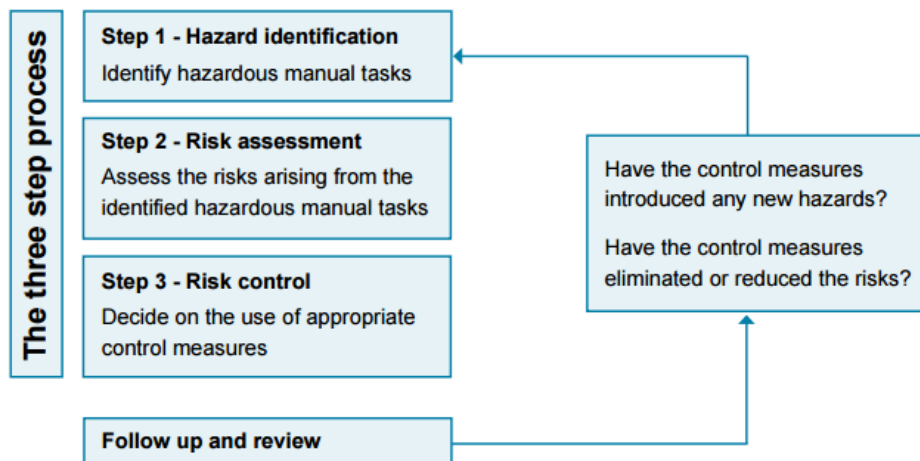
An injury or disease of the musculoskeletal system can arise over a period of time (frequent or prolonged manual tasks over a period of time) or suddenly (such as from a single lift, being heavy, awkward or an unexpected event such as trip and fall while carrying a large box) when performing manual tasks.

Risk factors

Some of the more common manual tasks risk factors encountered by supermarket workers that can result in injury (although it will vary between the various job roles) include:

- handling heavy, bulky or awkward loads
- holding loads/ arms away from trunk
- twisting back, neck or upper body
- reaching and load handling at low levels and above shoulder height
- repetitive movements
- strenuous lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing and pulling
- load handling on one side
- sustained and repetitive gripping
- inadequate task variety or breaks
- working under time pressures
- working in cold environments
- postural or movement constraints due to working in narrow or obstructed work areas
- sustained and repetitive gripping
- inadequate task variety or breaks (tasks rotation)

How can you reduce the risk of injury from manual tasks?



The first step, in consultation with your workers, is to identify the manual task hazards for your workplace. This can be done via completing workplace walk-throughs or inspections to identify hazards (you can use the included checklist and add any additional hazards to the checklist that you find); analysis of past hazard and incident forms and previous injury records; talking with workers about tasks they find difficult or demanding; and observing staff while they complete common tasks to collect information.

Next step, in consultation with workers, identify trends and determine which tasks are higher risk/priority. For each task, complete a risk assessment to identify which risk factors are present for that task. Risk factors may be actions & postures; forces & loads; vibration; work environment; systems of work; and worker characteristics – please refer to the [WA Manual Tasks Code of Practice \(2010\)](#) available on the WorkSafe website for more information. The risk assessment should also determine what consequences/harm may result from performing that task, and how likely it is that this harm occurs.

Step three: Controlling the risk of injury may involve:

1. eliminating the hazard or hazardous task
2. re-designing, modifying, altering or substituting the hazard or hazardous task
3. administrative controls

Finally, when any control is implemented, make sure follow up and evaluation occurs to ensure that the control is adequately eliminating or minimising the risk and has not introduced new risks.

What is a risk assessment?

The occupational safety and health laws require risk assessments to be carried out.

A risk assessment is the process of determining whether there is a risk associated with an identified hazard, that is, whether there is any likelihood of injury or harm.

Risk rating table – for working out level of risk Use the vertical and horizontal columns to consider both the likelihood of injury or harm to health and the consequences to work out the level of risk

Likelihood of injury or harm to health	Consequences of any injuries or harm to health			
	Insignificant eg no injuries	Moderate eg first aid	Major eg extensive injuries	Catastrophic eg death
Very likely	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
Moderate	Low	High	Extreme	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Highly unlikely (rare)	Low	Moderate	High	High

Risk assessment is a 'best estimate' on the basis of available information. It is important the responsible person undertaking a risk assessment has the necessary information, knowledge and experience of the work environment and work process, or such a person is involved.

1. If the hazard falls into 'high' or 'extreme', based on your view of how likely it is someone will get hurt and what level of injury could happen, then you need to fix it straight away.
If it is lower down in the table – moderate or low – then plan when you will fix it.

Remember hazards have to be controlled – you can't ignore them

Risk control

Eliminate the hazard

Controls

Controls that **eliminate the hazard** include using automated equipment to move stock rather than manually moving stock. Options include:

- conveyors at checkouts
- forklifts to move pallets
- automated pallet jacks or motorised trolleys that require guidance only

Re-design, modify or substitute

Tasks can be **redesigned, modified, altered or substituted** to minimise the risk of the manual task hazard. Controls that achieve this aim include:

1. Modifying the work area and layout
2. Modifying the load
3. Modifying the items, equipment and tools
4. Modifying the working environment
5. Modifying systems of work, work organisation and work practices

Work area and layout

- redesign of workplace layout and systems to eliminate double handling (eg using double sided upright dairy fridges, where newer stock is loaded from the rear, eliminating the need to remove older goods prior to stocking for stock rotation)
- redesign layout of storage areas both at front and rear of stores, so that stock placement are appropriate taking into consideration item weight, dimension, size, turnover etc.
- improve access to loaded pallets, from pertinent sides. Use pallet stands or pallet lifters to raise the heights of pallets when handling stock at lower levels of the pallet
- ensure adequate space to access shelving systems, cool rooms and equipment to minimise twisting or work in constrained postures
- ensure that equipment is stored close to where it is needed to encourage use

The load

- where goods are provided by suppliers in large, awkward or heavy containers/ bags, negotiate with suppliers for goods to be provided in smaller sizes/weights or more appropriate containers (e.g. replacing sacks with boxes/containers with built in handles)
- break goods down into smaller loads prior to movement.
- instigate height and weight restrictions on trolleys (especially cage trolleys) to allow clear vision over trolleys and to reduce strenuous pushing/ pulling

Items, equipment and tools

- ensure that appropriate equipment is available for use in manual tasks – eg steps, platform ladders and trolleys (electric/manual pallet jacks etc)
- provide height appropriate work benches for produce, bakery, deli and butchers areas to accommodate staff variability.
- Provision of left and right handed checkout stations, to reduce repetitive loading on one side of the body

Working environment

- improve lighting, reduce noise and other distractions and ensure adequate ventilation
- provide adequate space for handling objects (avoid over-ordering of stock, which impacts on ability to store and handle stock and leads to overcrowding of shelves and floor space)
- ensure floor surfaces are maintained in good, smooth and clean/ clear condition to facilitate effective use of trolleys and prevent slips/tips

Systems of work, organisation and practices

- provide adequate rest breaks; task variety; and rotation between tasks or work areas (e.g. between right and left hand checkouts, bulk checkouts and express lanes) to allow workers to use different actions and postures
- ensure workloads are appropriate to physical capacity of workers.
- space deliveries over the course of the week, so that there are not peaks in handling of incoming goods on any one day or time of day
- ensure appropriate staffing levels at peak time periods
- review if working hours are appropriate for the types of manual tasks being completed
- ensure all equipment is regularly inspected, serviced and maintained for continued ease of use
- involve staff in selection of new equipment, and where possible, trial equipment prior to purchase

Administrative controls

Administrative controls

Administrative controls are the last line of defense and should not be used as the primary or only control for manual task hazards. Administrative controls include:

- provision of training, information and supervision
- developing and enforcing policies and procedures
- providing personal protective equipment such as jackets and gloves for cool room work.

More information can be found at [WA Manual Tasks Code of Practice \(2010\)](#)

Training in manual tasks

Those workers and self-employed people who are required to undertake the manual tasks should also attend task specific training.

WorkSafe has developed a sample training package that can be adapted and modified for your workplace (templates downloadable for free from website).

- [Manual tasks training package](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/manual-tasks-training-package) www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/manual-tasks-training-package
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Safety for small business

WorkSafe has developed a guide to safety and health in small business, which is intended to provide an overview of occupational health and safety and includes a quick safety quiz to assist you in determining if you have done enough to protect yourself and those within your duty of care.

How does your workplace measure up is [a short quiz](#), which will assist you by referring to this website page: www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/introduction-safety-small-business

What may happen when you are unprepared?

Businesses with poor safety and health practices could cause harm to workers or in the case of a family business, family members. Additionally, the business may face financial burden and disruption.

With already limited resources, a small business might face hardship if it has to deal with just one serious work-related injury or incident. In the case of a self-employed business, the business may have to shut down.

Case study

A supermarket in the metropolitan area was fined \$3,500 and charged court costs by the Magistrates Court of Western Australia for being in breach of sections 19(1) and 19(2) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*. The business had failed, so far as was practicable, to provide and maintain a working environment in which its employees were not exposed to hazards and by that failure caused serious harm to an employee.

A night filler, on her first shift at the supermarket, was given a ladder by the checkout supervisor to use to access stock stored on the higher shelves. She noticed that other night fillers were standing on three milk crates stacked together for the same task.

Two days later she was given three plastic milk crates by the night filler's manager to use as a ladder. She stacked the crates in the same way that she had seen the other employees use. That evening she fell when one of the crates cracked and caused her to lose her balance.

The night filler lost consciousness for a few seconds, and sustained bruising to her back, sprained her left knee and fractured a rib.

How do I use these checklists?

Use the checklists in this newsletter to inspect your workplace. You may see other hazards as you are going through – add them to the checklist.

Anything that you have ticked 'No' or added to the list needs to be fixed. So, look at each hazard using the table below to prioritise identified hazards.

Checklists

Training checklist			
Check	yes	no	comments
Manual task training occurs at induction, as part of refresher training and when work tasks are about to be changed or introduced.			
Training has practical and theory components			
<p>Theory training covers a risk management approach (hazard identification, risk assessment, risk factors and risk controls); how to report hazards;</p> <p>Depending on the degree of risk, participants should have an understanding of some or all of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the key sections of the OSH Regulations relating to manual tasks and the code of practice; the role and responsibilities of the employer, workers and others and the consultation which should take place between employer and workers in order to identify hazardous manual tasks, and to assess and control risks; basic function of the spine, body postures, types of muscle work and principles of levers; the relationship between the human body and risk of injury from performing manual tasks; the activities included in manual tasks and the types of injuries that can result; risk factors and potential sources of risks of hazardous manual tasks; the risk management approach to manual tasks; and the application of relevant control strategies (e.g. purchasing and using appropriate equipment). 			
Practical training covers preparing environment, selecting and using equipment; effective working postures and technique training for lifting, push/pull, carrying and holding			
<p>After training, participants should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise the risks and the sources of risks associated with the manual tasks, and in consultation decide the best way to minimise them; prepare the workplace layout and environment to perform manual tasks safely; prepare the load, where applicable; organise the task and work flow to minimise the risk of injury; select, adjust and use relevant mechanical aids and handling devices; select, adjust and use relevant tools and equipment; and perform and maintain safe work practices. 			

Systems checklist			
Check	yes	no	
Manual task hazards are identified via a range of means (workplace inspections, analysis of hazard/ incident reports, hazard reporting system, consultation with employees, observing tasks)			
Risk assessments are completed for identified manual task hazards			
Work processes are designed to minimise double handling of stock (e.g. stock rotation, double handling from pallets/ trolleys/ shelving)			
Workers rotate between work areas, work tasks and work environments to minimise repetition and prolonged periods in sustained postures			
Workers have adequate rest breaks			
Stock deliveries are spaced across the work week to minimise peaks in manual task requirements on any one day			

Front of store shelving/storage checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Stock stored on shelves and ridge capping are at appropriate height and depth to reduce manual task and fall injuries; consider item, size/weight/dimensions/turnover and eliminating the capping altogether			
Stock is stored securely and is stable with minimal risk of falling (no overhanging from shelves)			
Freezers & chiller displays are designed to minimise awkward postures during stocking tasks (e.g. upright freezers, rather than deep chest style freezers)			
Kneeling pads available for use when employees replenishing bottom shelves			

Checkout work areas checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Both left and right hand style check outs are available			
Workers rotate regularly between left and right hand style check outs			
Workers rotate regularly between bulk and express customer service lanes			
Systems are in place to minimise overloading of customers bags			
Systems are in place to leave heavy items in trolleys (e.g. soft drinks, bulk dog food), such as touch screen, barcode copies for scanning			
Checkout work station is designed to minimise bending, twisting, reaching and repetitive movement (e.g. has conveyor belts, upright and horizontal scanners, bag holders in proximity to scanners, weighing stations incorporated into scanners, touch screens or reference guides at appropriate heights/ within easy reach)			
Checkout operators have adequate, postural and movement variety and breaks.			

Deli checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Slicer dial is turned to "0" to prevent lacerations after each use.			
Staff training and instruction provided for slicers (during use, after use, cleaning)			
Weighing scales are at appropriate height (to minimize repetitive lifting above shoulder height)			
Risk assessment conducted regarding employees awkward posture when obtain product while serving customers			
Job rotation – provide tasks with a variety of postures and movements.			

General access/egress & environment checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Passages and walkways are kept free from obstructions			
Appropriate emergency exits are provided, kept free from obstructions and are signposted			
Environment is generally in clean condition, clear from clutter, and minimises risk of constrained postures due to overcrowding			
Environment is well lit, with good ventilation and temperature controlled			

Equipment: ladders, steps and trolleys checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Appropriate steps and platform style step ladders available (meet Australian Standards; platform supports whole of both feet; rated for commercial/ industrial use; adequate height; lightweight/ mobile for ease of movement)			
Sufficient numbers of steps and ladders are available			
Steps and ladders are stored close to where they are needed			
Appropriate trolleys available (range of trolleys according to type needed; goods easily accessible when on/ in trolley)			
Trolleys are used appropriately (not overloaded, stock is securely stacked, worker can see over the top of trolley to path ahead)			
Sufficient numbers of trolleys are available			
Flooring is kept clear, clean and free of debris to allow ease of trolley use			
Trolleys, ladders and steps are regularly inspected and maintained to ensure continued good condition (e.g. checking handles, castors, platforms for general condition, wear and tear, buildup of dirt).			

Forklift/ pallet jacks checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Staff using forklifts have appropriate training and license, and consistently wear seatbelts			
Forklift appropriately maintained (log books, pre-start checklists, regular servicing/ inspection) and in good condition			
Staff using pallet jacks have been appropriately trained			
Keys to forklifts are stored in appropriate area when forklifts are not in use			
Pallet jacks are in good condition and regularly inspected/ maintained			
Pallet jacks stored close to where used/ needed, to encourage use			
Pallets are not overloaded with stock, creating excessive push/pull forces when using pallet jacks			
Pallets are loaded to a safe working height, allowing clear vision over stock when using forklift or pallet jack			

Loading docks checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Loading dock is designed to prevent risk of forklifts, pallet jacks or pedestrians falling over edge (for example, highlighted edges, raised edges, chained off sections when trucks not there)			
Loading dock surface in good condition to minimise slips/trips or jerky movements on equipment			
Loading dock has a dock leveler where needed, and dock leveler is regularly inspected and maintained			
Loading dock is easily accessible and not congested			
Systems in place to minimise risk of collision between pedestrians and forklifts/ other equipment			
External doors to loading docks are easy to open and in good condition			
Bale machine is serviced inspected & repaired			
Only trained staff to operate bale machine and have instructions available to refer to			

Rear freezer & chiller rooms checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Stock stored on shelves and pallets are at appropriate heights and depths to minimize manual task and fall injuries.			
Stock is stable with minimal risk of falling down.			
Equipment (e.g. trolleys, steps/ ladders) are readily available for use and are stored at convenient locations (outside of freezer & chiller room)			
There is sufficient space to work and use equipment			
Appropriate PPE are provided for staff to work in the chiller and freezer rooms (e.g. thermal gloves and jackets).			
Systems present to prevent accidental locking of staff within freezer and chiller rooms			
Door easy to open and in good condition			

Rear stores areas (including bakery, fresh produce and butchery) checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Stock stored on shelves and pallets are at appropriate heights and depths to minimize manual task and fall injuries.			
Stock is stable with minimal risk of falling down.			
Equipment (trolleys, steps/ladders) are readily available to assist and stored in convenient location			
There is sufficient space in which to work and use equipment			
Empty pallets are moved safely and securely stored			
Pallets are positioned so that relevant sides of pallets are accessible			
Floors/ stores locations are clearly marked to show pallet placement/ walkways			
Work benches are at appropriate heights or cater to different heights of staff via adjustability, different height benches or standing platforms			
Appropriate trolleys are used to move stock			

Other issues checklist

Check	yes	no	comments
Systems in place for workplace consultation (safety committees, safety reps, regular staff meetings, new equipment trials with workers, workers are involved in investigating hazards/ incidents)			
Notifiable injuries are reported to WorkSafe			
Incidents and hazards are investigated and investigation outcomes are communicated to workers			
General safety induction is provided to all new workers, including training in hazard identification and reporting of incidents			
Appropriate supervision is provided for all workers to ensure compliance with safety instructions			

Toolbox and essential information

This information has been developed and compiled to assist you manage safety and health in the workplace.

Workplace safety forms

- [Compliance tool for hazardous substances](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/hazardous-substances-compliance-tool)
http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/hazardous-substances-compliance-tool
- [Hazard identification form](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/hazard-identification-form) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/hazard-identification-form
- [Job Safety Analysis \(JSA\)](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/job-safety-analysis-jsa) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/job-safety-analysis-jsa
- [Quick safety quiz for small business](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/quick-safety-quiz-small-business) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/quick-safety-quiz-small-business
- [Safety Action Plan](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/safety-action-plan-small-business) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/safety-action-plan-small-business
- [Toolbox and pre-start talk form](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/toolbox-pre-start-talks-small-business) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/toolbox-pre-start-talks-small-business

Notify WorkSafe of injury or disease

- [Notification of disease](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/notification-disease-form-2) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/notification-disease-form-2
- [Notification of injury](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/notification-injury-form-1) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/notification-injury-form-1

Safety publications

- [Workplace safety and health consultation in small business](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/workplace-safety-and-health-consultation-small-business)
http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/workplace-safety-and-health-consultation-small-business
- Code of practice: [First aid facilities and services, workplace amenities and facilities, and personal protective clothing and equipment](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/code-practice-first-aid-facilities-and-services-workplace-amenities-and-facilities) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/code-practice-first-aid-facilities-and-services-workplace-amenities-and-facilities
- Guidance note: [Preparing for emergency evacuations at the workplace](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/guidance-note-preparing-emergency-evacuations-workplace)
http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/guidance-note-preparing-emergency-evacuations-workplace
- [Checklists and Subby Pack](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/checklists-and-subby-pack) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/checklists-and-subby-pack
- [Providing training, information and instructions](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/providing-safety-training-information-and-instructions-small-business) http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/providing-safety-training-information-and-instructions-small-business
- [Toolbox safety meetings/pre-start talks - small business](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/toolbox-pre-start-talks-small-business)
http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/toolbox-pre-start-talks-small-business
- Safe Work Australia Guide: [Organising health and safety training for your workplace](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/acgm1989organisinghstraining)
http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/acgm1989organisinghstraining

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