

# Independent Guide

## Manual handling - what does it mean to me?



Independent workplace compliance

### Introduction

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, as amended in 2002, apply to a wide range of activities, including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling and carrying. "Manual handling operations mean any transporting or supporting of a load (including lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving) by hand or by bodily force." More than a quarter of reported injuries relate to the handling of goods and materials. Many injuries will involve sprains, strains, fractures or cuts. All can result in absence from work and normal work activity, as well as prolonged pain. Injuries from manual handling can occur wherever people are at work, for example on farms, building sites, factories, offices, warehouses and hospitals, and while making deliveries.

### What are the employer's duties?

- As far as is reasonably practicable, avoid employees undertaking operations which involve an injury risk.
- To make a suitable and sufficient assessment of manual handling operations.
- To provide any equipment in the interest of health and safety.

### What are the employee's duties?

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.
- Cooperate with their employer to enable them to comply with health and safety duties.
- Do not intentionally or recklessly interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interests of health and safety.

### Manual handling technique

The spine is made up of movable vertebrae, each of which is separated by a disc bound together by fibrous tissues. It provides many functions, including support, protection of the spinal cord, and acting as a shock absorber. The back is split into three sections known as the cervical, thoracic and lumbar regions. Commonly, most back problems due to poor manual handling technique occur in the lumbar region. Correct manual handling techniques and applications will protect the spine from damage.

Manual Handling techniques – kinetic principles - correct manual handling relies on correct technique, not brute force. Correct technique requires six basic principles:

- Keep the back straight. Always keep it as straight as possible when lifting.
- Use the leg muscles. Use powerful leg muscles to rise from squatting position.
- Keep load close to body. This helps to maintain stability.
- Keep elbows close to the side. This helps avoid placing strain on the upper shoulders.
- Use a palm grip. Hold load well into the roots of the fingers.
- Position of feet. Keep feet apart and facing the direction of travel. Ensures stability.

Many other factors should also be considered, including the following:

- Always assess a job before handling, to determine the best method of lifting without causing damage to yourself and others.
- Remove any obstacles in the path of travel.
- Use mechanical aids.
- Make loads lighter, or smaller, and more manageable.
- Dress in appropriate clothing if necessary, for example steel-toed shoes.
- Use a common-sense approach.
- Avoid manual handling operations if practicable.

**This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 30 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.**



### Assurity Consulting Limited

26 Redkirk Way Horsham West Sussex RH13 5QH  
t +44 (0)1403 269375 e info@assurityconsulting.co.uk  
w [assurityconsulting.co.uk](http://assurityconsulting.co.uk)

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