

HARLOW COUNCIL

Addendum to Health and Safety Policy

Manual Handling

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Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places specific duties on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees as well as the health and safety of other persons who may be affected by their work activities.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers must assess significant risks to the health and safety of both employees and other persons who may be affected by their work activities.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations makes it a requirement that where a general risk assessment is not able to reduce manual risks then a more specific assessment is to be undertaken.

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence, which in serious cases could lead to dismissal.

Summary of Duties

Under the Manual Handling Operations Regulations (MHOR), manual handling is interpreted as the transporting or supporting of any load, which also includes a person or an animal.

Where it is not possible to eliminate hazardous manual handling, an assessment must be undertaken to determine the level of risk. Suitable controls must then be introduced to reduce the risk of injury to the lowest extent reasonably practicable. This may be achieved by the use of automation, mechanical aids, lighter loads or even redesigning the system of work.

An assessment, which could be incorporated into the general workplace risk assessment programme, should take into consideration the task, the load, the individual, the environment and any other factors which may effect safe lifting and carrying, for example the use of personal protective equipment.

Assessments should be reviewed on a periodic basis or when there is a significant change in the:

- Activity or process
- Working environment
- Numbers or abilities of personnel
- Nature of the load(s) to be handled

Reassessment may also be required where accidents/absence statistics show that the original control measures were not sufficiently effective.

Where possible, the employer is also under a duty to provide employees with information on the weight of the load and the centre of gravity, where this is not positioned centrally.

There is no maximum weight that a person can be required to handle. Tasks should be assessed on the basis of an ergonomic approach to manual handling operations at the workplace, i.e. fitting the task to suit personal abilities and limitations.

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act requires the provision of suitable training, instruction and information. This extends to training in safe methods of lifting and carrying for those employees who undertake manual handling activities. MHOR also require appropriate steps to be taken to reduce risk, one of which will be the provision of adequate training.

Record Keeping

Employers with five or more employees must record assessments which have identified a significant risk of injury. These may be kept in any format, provided they are easily retrievable and kept up to date. These records should identify the following.

- Details of the area or work activity being assessed
- The hazards
- The people who may be at risk
- The risk to those people from the hazards identified i.e. likelihood and severity of any injury
- Existing control measures, including any training provided
- Action proposed as a result of the assessment

Assessments of low risk activities which can be very quickly and easily repeated need not be formally recorded.

Records should also be kept of any training given to employees.

General Policy Statement

Statistics show that manual handling is one of the most common causes of absence through injury at the workplace. More than one third of lost time accidents are caused in this way, and injuries may often have long term effects. This policy is intended to help reduce the risk of manual handling injuries and to provide guidance on the measures that should be taken to ensure safe lifting and carrying at the workplace.

Harlow Council will work towards achieving the position that operations which involve manual handling are reduced, so far as is reasonably practicable. Measures to achieve this include ergonomic design of the workplace and activity, the provision of automated or mechanical aids such as trolleys and hoists etc., reducing the weight of packaged materials e.g. plaster, cement etc. and training in manual handling.

The relevant Head of Service is responsible for implementation of this policy.

Assessment of Risk

An assessment of manual handling activities will be carried out by competent persons. Risks which are identified will be reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable and the following factors will be considered during the assessment.

The task

Bending and stooping to lift a load significantly increases the risk of back injury. Items should ideally be lifted from no lower than knee height to no higher than shoulder height. Outside this range, lifting capacity is reduced and the risk of injury is increased. Where items are required to be lifted from above shoulder height, a stand or suitable means of access should be used. Items which are pushed or pulled should be as near to waist level as possible. Pushing is preferable particularly where the back can rest against a fixed object to give leverage.

Carrying distances should be minimised, especially if the task is regularly repeated. Repetitive tasks should be avoided wherever possible. Tasks which involve lifting and carrying should be designed in such a way as to allow for sufficient rest breaks to avoid fatigue.

The load

The load should be kept as near as possible to the body trunk to reduce strain and should not be of such size as to obscure vision. An indication of the weight of the load and the centre of gravity should be provided where appropriate.

Unstable loads should be handled with particular caution, as the change in centre of gravity is likely to result in overbalancing. Ensure that there is a secure hand hold, using gloves where necessary to protect against sharp edges or splinters.

The individual

Consideration must be given to age, body weight, physical fitness and personal limitations. Employees must not attempt to handle loads which are beyond their individual capability, but should seek assistance. Allowance should be made in respect of persons with genuine physical or clinical reasons for avoiding lifting. This will also apply to pregnant women who should not be required to undertake hazardous lifting or carrying tasks.

Sufficient knowledge and understanding of the work is an important factor in reducing the risk of injury. Individuals undertaking lifting or carrying must be given suitable instruction, training and information in order to carry out the work with minimum risk.

The working environment

There must be adequate space to enable the activity to be conducted in safety and the transportation route should be free from obstruction. Lighting, heating and weather conditions must be taken into account. Floors and other working surfaces must be in a safe condition, and adequate ventilation is required, particularly where there is no natural ventilation.

Other factors

Use of personal protective equipment may be necessary whilst carrying out manual handling activities. If the use of PPE restricts safe and easy movement, this should be reported. Constant interruptions from other workers must be avoided as this can reduce the concentration of an individual.

Duties of Line Management

Managers and/or supervisors must ensure that:

- Manual handling assessments are carried out and relevant records are kept
- Employees are properly supervised
- Adequate information and training is provided to persons carrying out manual handling activities
- Any injuries or incidents relating to manual handling are investigated, with remedial action taken
- Employees adhere to safe systems of work
- Safety arrangements for manual handling operations are regularly monitored and reviewed
- Employees undertaking manual handling activities are suitably screened for reasons of health and safety, before undertaking the work
- Special arrangements are made, where necessary, for individuals with health conditions which could be adversely affected by manual handling operations

Duties of Employees

Employees must ensure that:

- They report to management (or equivalent) any personal conditions which may be detrimentally affected by the manual handling activity
- They comply with instruction and training which is provided in their interest of safe manual handling activities
- Their own health and safety is not put at risk when carrying out manual handling activities
- They use equipment which has been provided to minimise manual handling activities
- Report any problems relating to the activity to their line management

Information and Training

Suitable information will be provided to persons who are required to carry out manual handling activities.

Harlow Council works towards ensuring that all relevant members of staff are provided with appropriate manual handling training.

Safe System of Work

Poor lifting and carrying techniques can result in discomfort and increase the risk of injury and, in extreme circumstances, these injuries can have permanent effects. Risks can be reduced by adopting the following simple precautions:

- Ensure that formalised systems of work which have been designed for the work activity are complied with
- Make full and proper use of aids for lifting and carrying such as trolleys, hoists and access equipment
- Store heavy items between shoulder and hip height. Where possible, only store small light items above shoulder or below knee height
- Adopt lifting techniques outlined in training courses
- Use the legs and knees to bend and lift - do not stoop or bend the back
- Avoid tasks which regularly require stretching or twisting
- Ensure that there are no sharp, hot or cold edges which could cause injury
- Ensure that walkways are free from obstructions
- Make full and proper use of personal protective equipment

- Manual handling activities range from; lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, restraining, throwing and carrying
- Report any problems or concerns associated with manual handling operations to your line management without delay

Summary

More than a third of time lost injuries at work are caused by manual handling activities. Simple, common sense measures can be taken to reduce these risks. The four most important steps are;

- Follow the system of work, risk assessments, using handling aids properly and effectively
- Never take personal risks by overreaching, twisting, stretching, stooping or over-exerting during a handling task
- Implement lifting technique advice given during manual handling training
- Report any problems with the work activity or equipment as soon as these arise and ask for assistance where necessary

Note - If in doubt as to any manual handling task please seek advice from the Health and Safety Team.

Health and Safety Team

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Revision History

Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
	None	Original Draft document	
		Updates from Draft. Inserted Revision History. Logo changed	No
1/2014	None	Reviewed and updated	No
April 2020		Reviewed and updated Included range of manual handling activities	No