



Guide To Manual Handling



There are many factors which can affect the risk of injury from manual handling procedures within the workplace. The law does not set a maximum weight which is safe to handle because weight is only one risk factor that must be considered under the regulations. Other risk factors include:

- Individual Capability
- Distance the load has to be handled
- Repetition of handling the load
- The shape and bulk of the load
- The ability to grip the load - e.g. a box with no handles may be harder to grip
- The stability of the load – e.g. liquid in a container could move around causing the load to be unbalanced and unstable.

What the regulations say

The [Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992](#) set out the employers' responsibilities and give them guidance on how to carry out risk assessments.

An outline of the regulations is as follows-

- ***The avoidance of manual handling altogether.*** Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, states 'Each employer shall, so far as reasonably practicable, avoid the need for his employees to undertake any manual handling operations at work which involve a risk to their being injured.'

The employer should first looking at getting rid of the need for employees to carry out any manual handling that could cause injury or harm. The employers are obliged to do this if it is reasonable and practical to do so. Reasonable and practical is usually judged by balancing cost against the likelihood of injury to an employee.

- ***Risk assessments of any manual handling that cannot be eliminated.*** Regulation 4(1)(b) of the Manual Handling Operations regulations 1992, states 'Each employer shall-
(a) where it is not reasonably practicable to avoid the need for his employees to undertake any manual handling operations at work which involve a risk of their being injured –
(i) make a suitable and sufficient assessment of all such manual handling operations to be undertaken by them, having regard to the factors which are specified in column 1 of schedule 1 to these regulations and considering the questions which are specified in the corresponding entry in column 2 of that schedule.'

In some cases manual handling can not be avoided. In these cases the employer is responsible for carrying out assessments on any hazards that could cause harm to the employee as a result of manual handling.

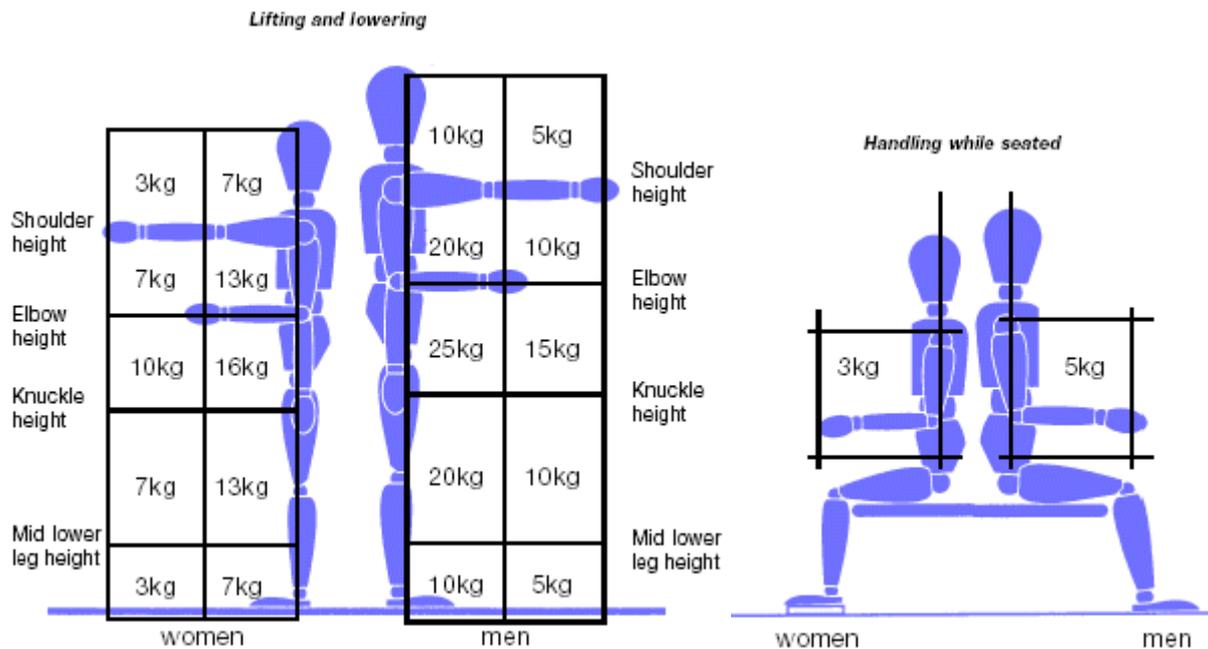
The risk assessments must consider the tasks, the loads, the working environment, individual capability and any other factors that may affect the manual handling process.

- **Reducing the risk of Injury** Regulation 4(1)(b)(ii) of the manual handling operations regulations 1992 states 'Each employer shall-
 (b) where it is not reasonably practicable to avoid the need for his employees to undertake any manual handling operations at work which involve a risk of their being injured-
 (ii) take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury to those employees arising out of their undertaking any such manual handling operations to the lowest level reasonably practicable.'

If there is a risk to employees identified in the risk assessment the employer has to look at ways to eliminate or reduce the risk. If it can't be eliminated, the risk has to be minimised to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

HSE Guidance

The HSE gives advice on what sort of weights could cause injury. The HSE stress that these are not safe weights to lift. Even lighter loads could cause injury if there are other risk factors present. The guideline weights can be found in the Usdaw guide to preventing manual handling injuries.



Remember these are not maximum weights. But members who are handling these weights are liable to injury, so a more detailed risk assessment is needed. Handling of lighter weights can still cause injury if the work is repetitive or the load is awkward to handle or there are obstacles to safe handling.

The HSE has developed a couple of tools that can help to analyse some manual handling tasks.

The [Manual Handling Assessment Chart](#) (MAC) tool can help with lifting, carrying and team handling tasks.

The [Assessment of Repetitive Tasks](#) (ART) tool can help with repetitive tasks that involve the use of the arms and hands.

Both tools have their limitations but can help reps to look at options to reduce the risk by changing some aspects of the way the work is done.

Checklist for reps

ISSUE	POSSIBLE RESOLUTION	REGULATION / FORM
Assessing the need for manual handling.	Ensure the employers consult with reps during the assessment.	Safety Reps and Safety Committee regs 1996 reg 4A
Avoiding Manual Handling altogether.	Can the delivery of bulk loads be changed? Can automation replace manual handling? (Separate risk assessments would have to be carried out for automation) Can workplace alterations be made to avoid lifting and carrying such as conveyor belts or work surfaces extended to slide loads?	Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
Risk assessment of any manual handling that cannot be eliminated.	Consultation with H&S rep should be carried out. Consideration for the risk assessments- (list is not exhaustive) THE TASK: Does it require twisting, stooping or reaching? Carrying over long distances? Strenuous pushing or pulling? Repetitive? THE LOADS: Heavy, bulky, unstable sharp? ENVIRONMENT: Hot, cold, poor lighting, uneven floors, enclosed space? INDIVIDUAL CAPABILITY: Does consideration need to be made to young or pregnant workers? Is special training required?	Management of Health and safety at work regs 1999. Safety Reps and Safety Committee regs 1996 reg 4A. Regulation 4(1) (b) (i) Manual Handling Operations regulations 1992.
	The same consideration that is made to a risk assessment should be made to reducing injury i.e. The task, the load and individual capability.	Regulation 4(1) (b) (ii) manual handling operations regulations 1992.
Member complains of musculoskeletal problems.	Inspect current risk assessments and consider requesting review. Consult with other members and look at task being carried out. This can be done by a body mapping survey. (phone the H&S section for further information) Inspect the accident book for similar problems. Raise it with management.	SRSC regs, 4(1) (a), (b), (c), (d), Reg 4A and Reg 7.
Action members should take.	Encourage members to enter any incident into the accident book. Help members to make a personal injury claim through the Legal Department.	Accident book held as employer's responsibility. Advise members to call FirstCall Usdaw on 0800 055 6333 to start a claim.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations and Approved Code of Practice and Guidance can be downloaded free from HSE Books - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l23.pdf>

Last updated June 2010