



## **ERGONOMIC WORK AND MANUAL LIFTING POLICY**

### **SCOPE**

This procedure is a guide for staff in safe manual handling practices. All staff are responsible for following steps detailed in this procedure for any manual handling activity as defined below.

Manual handling is any activity that involves lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, moving, holding or restraining. It also includes sustained and awkward postures or repetitive movements. Good manual handling techniques can help to prevent injury. Individuals, no matter what age or gender have differing physical abilities.

Training at time of hire includes general principles of ergonomics, recognition of hazards and injuries, procedures for reporting hazardous conditions, and methods and procedures for early reporting of injuries. Additionally, job specific training should be given on safe lifting and work practices, hazards, and controls for lifting tools and devices at the branch.

### **MANAGING MANUAL HANDLING RISK**

Before manual lifting is performed, a hazard assessment must be completed. The assessment must consider size, bulk, and weight of the object(s), if mechanical lifting equipment is required, if two-man lift is required, whether vision is obscured while carrying and the walking surface and path where the object is to be carried. The Branch Service Manager ensures monitoring and review of all manual handling systems and procedures on a regular basis.

Manual lifting equipment should be used instead of manual lifting where possible. Supervisors should enforce the use of lifting equipment. Each manual handling job is broken down into individual tasks to assist in identifying the range of potential manual handling hazards. Manual handling hazards are considered through employee consultation, reviewing incident reports and workers compensation records, and through observation.

### **OBSERVE AND RECORD:**

- workplace and workflow design
- how and where equipment is used
- how tools are stored and accessed
- tasks that require awkward postures and movements and/or that are forceful or repetitive
- how workers perform their tasks
- how workers might be injured.

Hazards are prioritized, taking into consideration likelihood, consequences and controls. When assessing manual handling risks, consider the following:

- workplace and workstation layout
- worker's posture and position
- duration and frequency of manual handling

- load location and distance to be moved
- characteristics of the load
- available equipment and resources to assist moving the load
- work environment
- staff member's health, skill and experience
- particular needs of the staff member.

### **MINIMIZING MANUAL HANDLING RISK**

Branch Service Manager ensures work practices are designed to minimize risk and be consistent with the safe handling of objects. Manual lifting equipment such as dollies, hand trucks, lift-assist devices, jacks, carts, hoists are provided for employees to use at client sites as needed. Other engineering controls such as, lift tables, and work station design shall be considered for branch workers. All objects, work practices and the working environment are designed, constructed and maintained to eliminate risks arising from manual handling.

The Work Health and Safety Regulation establishes a hierarchy of controls to minimize risk as outlined below:

- Substitute the hazard with a lesser hazard, for example use two x 20kg bags instead of one x 40kg bag
- Isolate the hazard from the person
- Minimize the risk by engineering means, for example ensuring staff have adjustable workstations to avoid unnecessary reaching or bending
- Minimize the risk by administrative means, such as providing training
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to assist with the move
- If one measure does not control the risk, a combination is used.

Where it is not practical to eliminate manual handling risks, Branch Service Manager designs the work activity to control these risks and, if necessary:

- Modify the design of objects or the work environment considering work design and work practices
- Provide mechanical aids or as a last resort use team lifting
- Ensure staff are trained in manual handling techniques, correct use of aids and team lifting procedures.

### **ASSESSING THE LIFT**

Before undertaking to lift an object, assess the start and finish heights and ensure clear pathways. For objects over 16kg use mechanical aids or, as a last resort use two or more people. For large (awkward) objects (even light ones) use mechanical aids or 2 person lift.

Consider your own capacity: do you have existing injuries or are you recovering from an illness? Performing a Lift In preparation for lifting an object, warm up the muscles by stretching and then test the weight of the load. Begin with a smaller load using a whole hand grip. For good balance, use a wide base of support and position yourself with your feet shoulder width apart. Use smooth motions and hold the load close to the body. Maintain the natural curves of the spine as you move through the lift. Use hip and knee joints to bend to the object rather than bending the spine in exaggerated curves. Do not twist or bend the back sideways. There is equipment available to assist staff to move and lift heavy items.

Musculoskeletal injuries caused by improper lifting must be investigated and documented. Incorporation of investigation findings into work procedures must be accomplished to prevent future injuries. Following the lift or move, report any discomfort you feel to your direct supervisor.

- Apply ice initially to the area and try to rest the area. Apply heat, stretches and massage to the area, keeping active to hasten recovery. Consult with Tate Engineering's Nurse Practitioner.
- If discomfort does not subside, report incident to supervisor and complete an Incident Report Form.
- Consult your medical practitioner if pain or discomfort does not settle.

All employees should identify new manual handling hazards, and report them to their supervisor. Branch Service Manager checks that solutions are appropriate and have not created new problems, checks the register of injuries and incident reports, and updates work procedures regularly. In addition to the annual review of risks and manual handling risk assessments, measures adopted to control the risk are reviewed when:

- There is evidence that the risk assessment is no longer valid, for example due to changes in technology or knowledge, from an incident investigation and/or report.
- An illness or injury results from exposure to the hazard.

Supervision must periodically evaluate work areas and employees' work techniques to assess the potential for and prevention of injuries. New operations should be evaluated to engineer out hazards before work processes are implemented.