



Manual Handling or Hazardous Manual Tasks

Manual handling or hazardous manual tasks account for a high proportion of workplace injuries and is a known risk to the wellbeing of workers - employees and volunteers.

Manual handling or hazardous manual tasks are terms used to describe any activity that requires a person to exert force to lift, lower, pull, push, carry or move, hold or restrain an object or person.

It can also be used in relation to repetitive tasks such as packing, cleaning, sorting and using tools and machinery.

Many of the tasks workers perform every day involve manual handling such as carrying a heavy box, lifting and moving equipment or even typing at a keyboard. Poor manual handling practices can cause injuries ranging from strains and sprains of the back, shoulder, neck, wrist and knee, to abdominal hernias, soft tissue damage, as well as ligament and tendon damage.

The chance of sustaining an injury increases with tasks that involve:

- Repetitive movements
- Awkward or sustained positions
- Twisting, turning and bending
- Working at a poorly set up work area
- Working for long periods without rest
- Handling unstable loads, and
- Lifting people, animals or other heavy objects.

Manual handling injuries are usually preventable through the use of correct manual handling practices.

When might this hazard apply?

In churches or administration offices, activities such as carrying boxes of copy paper, retrieving archive boxes, transporting audio visual sound/music equipment, moving tables, chairs, pews or pushing whiteboards into meeting rooms can, if done incorrectly, lead to an increased risk of injury.

Workers and contractors need to be made aware of correct manual handling procedures at induction and on an ongoing basis. Good office or work space design and mechanical aids can also help by minimising the amount of lifting and bending required to carry out tasks.

Rubbish and recycling bins can pose a risk of injury if they are too heavy or large for someone to manage on their own or if they are kept in an area that is difficult or awkward to access. Consider reducing the size of the bin, emptying it more frequently or devising a roster to share the load.

What must leaders do?

- Look for any workers performing tasks that involve:
 - forceful exertions, such as pushing, pulling, lifting and gripping
 - awkward postures, such as bending, over-reaching, arching and twisting
 - vibrations to the hands, arm or body
 - movements or forces that are repetitive (more than two per minute) and/or sustained (held for more than 30 seconds)
 - movements that go on for more than 20 minutes – check the duration of all movements.
- Consult with workers and examine past incident records to identify all the manual handling tasks in your churches and workplace



HAZARDS

- Identify the risks associated with manual handling tasks. Ask yourself these questions:
 - What might happen?
 - When might it happen?
 - Why might it happen?
 - What could cause this to happen (may there be multiple causes)?
- Consider what you are currently doing to reduce manual handling risks and whether it is effective (also known as controls)
- Develop and implement any new controls necessary
- Develop and communicate safe work procedures to workers, and
- Provide training in relation to safe manual handling and lifting techniques.

What can workers do?

There are some simple tips that significantly reduce the incidence of injuries from pushing, pulling, lifting and carrying. To safely perform manual tasks, workers should:

- Size up the load and the route – assess how heavy or awkward the load is and review any obstacles along the route (eg beware of potential hazards that may cause slips, trips or falls)
- Get mechanical assistance – can the load be placed on a trolley?
- Make two or more trips – don't try and carry heavy or awkward loads, or multiple items in one go
- Be careful with stairs – always leave one hand free and use the hand-rail
- Don't over reach – slide objects to you before lifting them
- Ask for help – ask someone for help and if asked to help, always do so willingly
- Complete a mobility assessment – when helping a person to move, ascertain whether he or she can weight bear, maintain balance and cooperate. Never attempt to lift a person.