# Manual Handling Injury Prevention Meeting Kit

Manual handling covers a wide range of activities including lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, restraining, throwing and carrying. It includes repetitive tasks such as packing, typing, assembling, cleaning and sorting, using hand-tools, operating machinery and equipment, and handling and restraining animals.

## MANUAL HANDLING – IDENTIFYING WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Factors in the workplace may increase the risk of an injury occurring. Such as:

- Walk through the workplace and look for potential hazards.
- Talk over risk factors with workers.
- Check through injury records to help pinpoint recurring problems.
- Regularly monitor and update risk identification.

## MANUAL HANDLING – ASSES THE RISK

- **Type of work** – working in a fixed posture for a prolonged period of time
- **Layout of the workspace** – a cramped or poorly designed workspace can force people to assume awkward postures, such as bending or twisting
- **Weight of an object** – a heavy load may be difficult to lift and carry
- **Location of an object** – heavy objects that have to be lifted awkwardly, for example above shoulder height or from below knee level
- **Duration and frequency** – increasing the number of times an object is handled or the length of time for which it is handled

- **condition of an object –** more effort may be required to manipulate badly designed or poorly maintained equipment
- **awkward loads –** loads that are difficult to grasp, slippery or an awkward shape
- **handling a live person or animal –** lifting or restraining a person or animal can cause sprains and other injuries.

# THE RISKS OF MANUAL HANDLING/INJURIES

**Back Injuries:** When completing a manual handling task your back is the weakest part of your body. If you have a poor lifting technique or are attempting to lift more than your body can handle you can cause serious injury to your back.

**Strains And Sprains:** When you over work your body by attempting to move a load which may be heavier than you expected, or simply harder to grip than you first anticipated you can overstretch your muscles.

**Hand Injuries:** Whatever type of manual handling activity you carry out it is more than likely you will be using your hands to grip the item. This turns the item into a hazard in itself if the item has sharp edges one can easily cut your hand as you form a grip.

**Foot Injuries:** These are often caused by the dropping of the load onto a foot, injuries can be serious if protective footwear is being used.

**Musculoskeletal Disorders:** Musculoskeletal disorders tend to happen over a longer period of time, it can be caused by repetitive lifting leading to damage, pain and or stiffness in tissue and joints.

**Slip, Trip And Fall Injuries:** Should a slip, trip or fall occur while you are carrying an item the injuries can be much more significant and the chance of an accident occurring can be increased.

**Hernias:** A hernia is the medical term used when an internal part

of the body pushes through a weakness in the muscle or surrounding tissue wall. Over straining while lifting loads heavier than you can handle can cause hernias.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR MANUAL HANDLING

### Hierarchy Of Controls – Elimination

Much of the manual handling on the job can be completely eliminated through proper planning, engineering controls, or use a piece of equipment to complete the lift.

# REDUCE MANUAL HANDLING RISKS

- change the task by asking ‘Does this task need to be carried out? If so, does it have to be done this way?’
- change the object by repacking a heavy load into smaller parcels.
- change the workspace by using ergonomic furniture.
- change the environmental conditions including heat, cold and vibration.
- use mechanical aids like wheelbarrows, conveyor belts, cranes or forklifts.
- change the nature of the work by offering frequent breaks or the chance to do different tasks
- offer proper training to inexperienced workers are more likely to be injured.
- Lift and carry heavy loads correctly by keeping the load close to the body and lifting with the thigh muscles.
- Never attempt to lift or carry loads if you think they are too heavy. Take frequent breaks
- Pushing a load (using your body weight to assist) will be less stressful on your body than pulling a load.
- Use mechanical aids or get help to lift or carry a heavy load whenever possible.
- Organise the work area to reduce the amount of bending, twisting and stretching required.
- Cool down after heavy work with gentle, sustained stretches.

- Exercise regularly warm up cold muscles with stretches before engaging in any manual work.

# FINAL WORD

Injuries due to manual handling can be hard to prevent, that is why eliminating as many of these lifts as possible is important. Plan out your work tasks and your work areas to reduce the chance of manual handling injuries. It is important to know your limits and not to exceed them. Even if you are strong it is easy to injure back muscles due to lifting awkward or heavy objects.