

Manual Handling toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Manual Handling.

Manual handling injuries are one of the most common types of injuries in workplaces. The main reason for this is that manual handling is carried out in almost every workplace—from construction sites to offices.

Manual handling refers to lifting, pulling, pushing, or carrying objects manually within a worksite. When done incorrectly, workers can experience injuries such as back injuries. To avoid these issues, we have put together this toolbox talk.

Why Run a Manual Handling Toolbox Talk?

- To make us more aware of hazards in the workplace
- To make us more aware of how to minimize workplace hazards to reduce unnecessary injuries
- To make us aware of how to properly pick up and move heavy objects in the workplace
- Ensures we all know our responsibilities to maintain a safe workplace (including management)
- Safety improves productivity

Types of Manual Handling Hazards

- **Loads** – when carrying heavy, bulky, unstable, sharp, or difficult to grasp loads, injuries can occur.
- **Not Enough Staff** – when carrying or lifting objects, sometimes the task is done without enough people to be safe.
- **Doing Repetitive Tasks** – when you carry out repetitive actions, it can tire muscles and hurt soft tissue which causes injuries to occur.
- **Having Bad Posture** – it's important to use the correct lifting techniques to avoid injury.

- **Surface/ Floor Hazards** – when carrying objects, it's important that there are no hazards on the floor that you could trip over.

How to Minimize Manual Handling Hazards

Before carrying out a task that requires manual handling, take a step back and think about the risks and consider:

- How long will the handling last?
- What distance does the load have to be moved?
- What is the size/shape and weight of the load?
- How many people are required to do the job safely?
- What are the most likely injuries that could occur from doing this job?

You can then think about how to minimize those risks and then consider actions such as:

- When possible, use trolleys, wheelsets, or skates to move large and awkward loads.
- Try to organize deliveries and storage of materials so that you reduce how far they need to be manually carried.
- Make sure all floors and surfaces are clear of obstacles before moving loads.
- When moving a load, make sure there is suitable lighting along the route.
- Make sure everybody involved in moving a load has proper vision along the route.
- Warm-up before carrying out manual handlings. This is because muscles cool down and you'll be more at risk of injury if you don't warm up first (just like exercise).
- Make sure everybody involved in the task is adequately fit and when required, stop to rest.
- Make sure you're wearing the correct PPE.
- When storing objects, try to store them at waist height to avoid the need to bend over to pick heavy objects up.
- If possible, modify objects to make them easier to move. For example, you can take heavy equipment apart and move it in stages.

Manual Handling Tips

- When carrying or lifting an object, make sure you stand reasonably close to the load, feet hip-width apart with one foot slightly forward

pointing in the direction going forward.

- Always bend your knees when lifting objects and keep your back straight.
- Make sure you have a secure grip on the load and use handles when available.
- Stop for rests when you need to.
- Try to avoid twisting movements as this can lead to back and body strain.

Key Takeaways

- Injuries in the workplace caused by bad manual handling techniques are one of the most common causes of injuries. For this reason, you must know how to properly handle heavy and awkward objects.
- Before carrying out a manual handling task, think about the risks involved.
- Once you know the risks, work out how to minimize those risks.
- Make sure everybody involved in a manual handling task is suitable to do the task.
- Use the correct lifting techniques.

[See all our toolbox talk topics here](#)