

Manual handling inspections

Checklist for safety representatives

This basic checklist should help you carry out workplace inspections of manual handling activities. The checklist is suitable for use in organisations of different sizes, industries and locations.

Which activities should you examine?

Make a difference - Aim to examine a cross-section of different tasks and not all of them. Focus on tasks presenting most handling risk in your workplace and identify solutions.

- Talk to fellow workers to identify 'difficult' handling jobs needing a lot of effort or linked with symptoms or back pain.
- Look at work-in-progress to spot the use of adapted tools, furniture, wrist supports, bandages, back belts etc as this indicates possible handling risks.
- Watch how the work is really done, don't assume you know.
- Consider core and support activities such as cleaning, maintenance goods receipt etc.
- Check the existing manual handling assessments and any action points.
- Look at the accident book, reports, near misses and absence records, results of body mapping.
- Identify risky tasks from published material such as the Better Backs pack.

What risks should you look for?

The following checklist will help you identify risk factors and consider possible solutions to avoid or reduce the risk. Think about the factors and solutions that are most applicable to the activity under review. If your employer has not carried out an adequate risk assessment of the tasks you examine, ask them to do one. By sharing your findings with them you can maximise the benefits of your work. There may be some jobs where use of handling aids or mechanisation can be agreed with your employer without the need for detailed assessment.





'The TUC fully supports HSE's Better Backs campaign. We urge safety representatives to get involved, by working together with employers and workers to manage back pain. Please use this checklist in your workplace – together we can make a difference.'

Hugh Robertson, Senior Policy Officer on Health and Safety, TUC

'We, in the Better Backs team, are delighted that the TUC is endorsing the Better Backs campaign. The enthusiasm, experience and expertise that union safety representatives bring to the campaign will make a really important contribution to its success.'

John Price, Better Backs Campaign Manager, HSE

Whatever your job, look after your back

Manual handling checklist

Problems to look for when making an assessment		Ways of reducing the risk of injury/back pain	
Do the tasks involve:		Can you:	
the risk factors specified below?		use a handling/lifting aid?	
holding loads away from the body?		improve workplace layout to improve posture and efficiency?	
twisting, stooping or reaching upwards?		reduce the amount of twisting and stooping?	
large vertical movement?		avoid lifting from floor level or above shoulder height, especially heavy loads?	
long carrying distances?		reduce carrying distances?	
strenuous pushing or pulling?		push rather than pull?	
repetitive handling?		avoid repetitive handling?	
insufficient rest or recovery time?		vary the work, allowing one set of muscles to rest while another is used?	
a work rate imposed by a process?			
Record any additional task-related problems here		Record any additional task-related solutions here	
The loads, are they:		Can you make the load:	
heavy, bulky or unwieldy?		lighter or less bulky, weight marked or in bag bags that that cannot be manually handled? Can mechanisation or handling aids be used?	
difficult to grasp?		easier to grasp – consider handles/handholds?	
unstable or likely to move unpredictably (eg animals)?		more stable or centre of gravity marked?	
Are they harmful, eg sharp or hot?		less damaging to hold?	
Are they awkwardly stacked?		If the load comes in from elsewhere, have you asked the supplier to help, eg provide handles, smaller packages, better stacking on pallets etc?	
Are they too large for the handler to see over?			
Record any additional load-related problems here		Record any additional load-related solutions here	

Problems to look for when making an assessment	Ways of reducing the risk of injury	
The working environment, are there:	Can the employer:	
constraints on posture?	remove obstructions to free movement?	
bumpy, obstructed or slippery floors?	provide better flooring?	
variations in levels?	avoid steps and steep ramps?	
hot/cold/humid conditions?	prevent extremes of hot and cold?	
poor lighting conditions?	improve lighting?	
gusts of wind or other strong air movements?	improve environment or clothing?	
restrictions on movements or posture from clothes or personal protective equipment (PPE)?	provide protective clothing or PPE that is less restrictive?	
	ensure employees' clothing and footwear is suitable for their work?	
Record any additional environment-related problems here	Record any additional environment-related solutions here	
Individual capacity, does the job:	Can the employer:	
require unusual capability, eg above-average strength or agility or capability different to that of the people doing the job?	pay more attention to individual capabilities, especially to those who have a physical weakness?	
endanger those with a health problem or learning/ physical disability?		
endanger pregnant women?	take extra care of pregnant workers?	
call for special information or training? This is particularly important for younger and less experienced workers.	provide more information and training and consider more supervision?	
	get advice from an occupational health advisor if needed.	
Record any additional individual capacity-related problems here	Record any additional individual capacity- related solutions here	

Problems to look for when making an assessment	Ways of reducing the risk of injury	
Handling aids and equipment:	Can the employer:	
is the device the correct type for the job?	provide equipment that is more suitable for the task?	
is it well maintained?	carry out planned preventive maintenance to prevent problems?	
are the wheels on the device suited to the floor surface?	change the wheels, tyres and/or flooring so that equipment moves easily?	
do the wheels run freely?		
is the handle height between the waist and shoulders?	provide better handles and handle grips?	
are the handle grips in good order and comfortable?		
are there any brakes? If so, do they work?	make the brakes easier to use, reliable and effective?	
Record any additional problems related to handling aids here	Record any additional solutions related to handling aids here	

Want to know more?

These leaflets are included in the Better Backs campaign pack. They are also available from the HSE website via betterbacks.hse.gov.uk.

The checklist is based on advice in *Getting to grips with manual handling: A short guide* Leaflet INDG143 (rev2) HSE Books 2004 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 2828 0) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf, which also contains advice on other aspects of handling such as pushing and pulling, training and lifting technique.

HSE's MAC tool *Manual handling assessment charts* Leaflet INDG383 HSE Books 2003 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 2741 1) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg383.pdf Are you making the best use of lifting and handling aids? Leaflet INDG398 HSE Books 2004 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 2900 7) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg398.pdf

Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended). Guidance on Regulations L23 (Third edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 0 7176 2823 X

For more information about managing back pain and the Better Backs campaign, visit betterbacks.hse.gov.uk or phone HSE's Infoline on: 0845 345 0055