

The Church of St. Patrick Drumbeg

Manual Handling Guide

Summary:

- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 cover any transporting or supporting of a load by hand or bodily force.
- Manual handling should form part of your health and safety risk assessments.
- Risk assessments should evaluate the tasks, loads, working environment and employee capability.
- A competent person who has knowledge of the nature of the handling operations should conduct the assessment.
- Each assessment will have differing amounts of detail and must be communicated to all relevant employees and workers.
- Steps must be taken if the assessment indicates a change in work practices is required.
- Employees are required to abide by the instructions given by their employer to ensure safe methods of manual handling.

Contents:

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Legal Considerations](#)
3. [The need for a Risk Assessment](#)
4. [Who should carry out the Assessment](#)
5. [Level of Detail](#)
6. [Minimising the Risk](#)
7. [Duty on Employees](#)
8. [Further Information](#)

1. INTRODUCTION

The HSE reports that manual handling is the main work activity causing back disorders, with 9.5 million working days lost each year (an average of 17 days for each case). This represents 40% of all days lost due to work related ill-health.

2. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 implement an EC directive on the manual handling of loads, supplement the general duties placed upon employers and others by the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, and the broad requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 and replace a number of earlier, outdated legal provisions.

Manual handling operations are defined as "any transporting or supporting of a load (including lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying, or moving thereof) by hand or bodily force".

3. THE NEED FOR A RISK ASSESSMENT

The Regulations should not be considered in isolation, but should be looked at in conjunction with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, which require employers to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees whilst at work.

Where this general assessment indicates the possibility of risks to employees from the manual handling of loads, the Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 should be followed. Under the Regulations, employers must, as far as is reasonably practicable, avoid the need for employees to undertake any manual handling operations at work which involve a risk of injury. This may, for example, be done by redesigning the task to avoid moving the load or by automating or mechanising the process (although it should be borne in mind that these solutions to the manual handling problem may, in themselves, pose other risks to health and safety).

4. WHO SHOULD CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENTS

In most cases, the employer should be able to carry out the assessment himself or herself, or delegate it to someone (or a team) within the organisation. However, in certain circumstances, outside help may be required.

Whoever carries out the assessment (be it an individual or a team) should have:

- Knowledge of the Regulations
- A knowledge of the nature of the handling operations
- A basic understanding of human capabilities
- The knowledge to identify high risk activities
- The capability to identify practical steps to reduce the risk.

5. LEVEL OF DETAIL

The detail of the assessment will depend very much on the individual circumstances. The HSE guidance draws a distinction between the employer's assessment (as required by the Regulations) and the everyday judgements that supervisors and others will have to make in dealing with manual handling operations.

The assessment should identify in broad terms the problems likely to arise during the kind of operations that can be foreseen and the measures that will be necessary to deal with them. These measures should include the provision of training to enable supervisors and individual employees to cope effectively with the operations they are likely to undertake.

Where the employer has cause to believe that his or her original assessment is no longer valid, or there has been a significant change in the manual handling operations to which it relates, that assessment should be reviewed and any necessary changes made.

Having made the assessment, the employer must then take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury to employees arising out of any such manual handling operations to the lowest level reasonably practicable. Appropriate steps must also be taken to provide any of those employees who are undertaking manual handling operations with general indications and, where it is reasonably practicable to do so, precise information on:

- The weight of each load
- The heaviest side of any load whose centre of gravity is not positioned centrally.

6. MINIMISING THE RISK

Where it is not reasonably practicable to take steps to avoid the risk, a structured approach should be taken to minimise the risk.

In relation to pulling and pushing loads, the following acronym can help to remember the risks factors involved:

- **Task:** what does it involve? Pulling/pushing heavy loads? Consider the surface, ie flat or sloped? Consider the distance that loads need to be moved.
- **Individual:** consider the individual's characteristics and capabilities, ie height - can he/she see over a large load? Is the trolley at a comfortable position for his/her height? Does the individual have a particular condition that needs to be considered, eg pregnancy or a physical disability?
- **Load:** is the load heavy, bulky, unwieldy or difficult to grasp? Is the moving/lifting equipment suitable for this load? Is the planned route clear?
- **Environment:** is the environment safe in which to move this load, eg width of corridor? When assessing the tasks, the employer should ask whether it involves handling or manipulating loads at a distance from the trunk.

7. DUTY ON EMPLOYEES

There is a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 on all workers to safeguard their health and safety and that of others likely to be affected by their activities and to co-operate with their employers to enable them to comply with their health and safety duties.

In addition, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 further require workers to make use of appropriate equipment provided for them and to use it in accordance with their training and instruction from their employer. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 require workers to make full and proper use of appropriate systems of work laid down by their employer to promote safety during the handling of loads.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

The HSE in Great Britain offers a number of [guides on manual handling](#) and further [advice on managing back pain](#) which is simple and easy to follow.

The HSE also has a [manual handling assessment chart](#) for assessing the risk related to a manual handling operation and which offers detailed advice on each of the elements covered.