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Policy: Manual Handling

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Manual Handling

This document forms part of Somerset County Council's Corporate Health And Safety policy [manual](#), which is available on the [CHSU Website](#) and iPost.

Services may supplement this policy with their own specific guidance.

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1. Purpose of Policy

Manual handling involves people using bodily force to lift, lower, pull, drag, push, twist or otherwise transport or support a load, either as an individual or as part of a team.

In this policy "a load" could be people with disabilities (who require support from employees in order to live) or inanimate objects.

Particularly at risk are those who:

Regularly handle heavy, awkward or bulky items as part o their job; or

Undertake a sequence of smaller, relatively minor tasks which create potentially harmful forces onto the musculo-skeletal system for considerable periods of time; or

Carry out tasks in difficult environmental situations; including space limitations, access restrictions, high or low storage height, and extremes of temperature.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Somerset County Council	2.2 Directors
2.3 Managers	2.4 Corporate Health and Safety Unit (CHSU).
2.5 Employees	

2.1 Somerset County Council will:

Conduct its activities so that no one should suffer new or further harm as a result of undertaking manual handling operations at work.

2.2 Directors and Delegated Senior Managers will:

- Provide managers with sufficient information to recognise activities giving rise to significant risks.
- Require managers and supervisors to identify all situations where manual handling activities are undertaken by their staff.
- Ensure that records are kept in the relevant locations of:
 - ❖ All significant findings of manual handling assessments.
 - ❖ All training provided for assessors, including the scope and content of training received.
- Monitor the frequency and nature of incidents reported where manual handling is identified as a factor.
- Follow the council's HR policy for returning to work.
- Ensure that only person's who have received appropriate training and have relevant experience, undertake detailed manual handling assessments. This is vital where tasks involve the support or movement of persons. In this case the assessor must be competent and specifically trained in this field.

2.3 Managers will:

- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy as part of the PRAD process.
- Provide information for all employees on basic good manual handling technique and ways of avoiding health conditions which may be related to manual handling
- Screen tasks and highlight those situations where manual handling activities expose persons to significant risk
- In those situations, eliminating the need for loads to be moved by manual effort where possible
- Undertake and record manual handling assessments
- Provide formal training for staff by competent instructors where it has been identified as a necessary control measure in risk assessments
- Provide refresher training at intervals not exceeding 3 years where indicated by the risk assessment or following a review of findings from monitoring activity.
- Encourage and remind employees to avoid placing themselves at risk.
- Involve their staff in the identification of tasks involving manual handling

The judgment whether the activities involve a significant risk (and therefore need to be fully assessed), is to be made with the participation of employees wherever possible using the following criteria:

1. Whether the loads to be moved exceed the guidance limits
2. Whether a specific task has to be repeated many times, where it is the repetition of movement, which may eventually result in harm; (In these circumstances the weights or force employed may be comparatively small, but the harm may still result.)
3. Whether the worker has control over the pace or duration of the task, particularly if he or she cannot take adequate pauses for rest;
4. When the **whole working day** is considered, whether the person is undertaking significant amounts of manual handling activity (which may accumulate from a number of different tasks);
5. Whether there are individual characteristics to be taken into account, such as health or recent absences; (Workers who are pregnant or new mothers, or young



persons are within the scope of special arrangements for risk assessments, and for these groups a full manual handling assessment must be made.)

6. Whether there has been work-related ill health, or an accident associated with the task in the past.

An assessment of a task or activity should in any case be carried out at the reasonable request of the individual required to undertake it - or their representative.

2.4 The Corporate Health and Safety Unit will:

- Offer advice to managers regarding this policy
- Maintain and communicate this policy
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy through feedback from the Occupational Health Service.
- Provide manual handling training provision.
- Review this policy at intervals not exceeding 3 years

2.5 Employees will:

- Not place themselves at risk by, making full use of any appropriate system of work provided for them.
- Make sensible use of knowledge to improvise when necessary – dynamic Risk Assessment.
- Inform their manager of:
 1. Any short coming they recognise in health and safety arrangements
 2. Any condition from which they are suffering which affects their ability to perform manual handling operations.

3.1 Guidance for Managers

<u>How to identify if there is a risk of injury</u>	<u>Lifting and lowering – general guidelines</u>
<u>Screening exercise</u>	<u>If the handler twists</u>
<u>Frequent lifting and lowering</u>	<u>Carrying</u>
<u>Pushing and pulling</u>	<u>Using the results</u>
<u>Are you saying I mustn't exceed the guidelines</u>	

How to Identify if there is a Risk of Injury

It is necessary to make a judgment in each case, based on evidence such as People puffing and sweating, excessive fatigue, bad posture, cramped work areas, awkward or heavy loads, carrying up or down stairs or a history of accidents / back trouble.

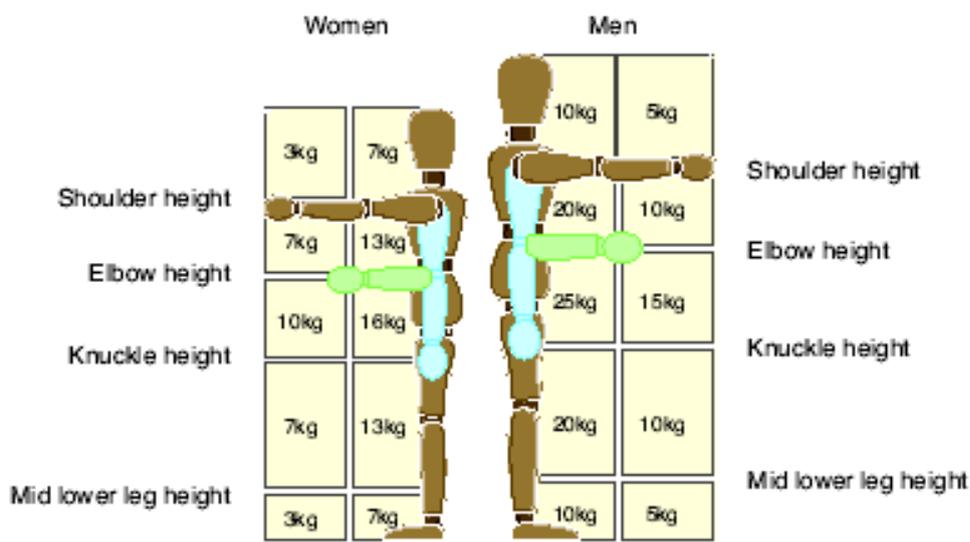
Handlers can often highlight which activities are unpopular, difficult or simply hard work.

Is this a precise technique?

With so many factors varying between jobs, people and workplaces, it is difficult to be precise. But the general guidelines in the following sections, taken from HSE guidance, should help to identify when a more detailed risk assessment is necessary.

Lifting and Lowering – General Guidelines

There is no such thing as a completely 'safe' manual handling operation, however if the work is carried out within the following guidelines the risks are reduced to an acceptable level and, unless there are other factors, there is no need for a more detailed assessment.



Use the diagram above to screen the activity to decide whether a full assessment is needed.

The diagram shows a series of boxes. Each one represents a zone in front of the person carrying out the task containing a guideline weight for lifting and lowering in that zone.

(Note that these guideline weights are significantly lower if handling is done with arms extended, or at a high or low level, as that is where injuries are most likely to occur.)

The guideline weights assume that the load is readily grasped with both hands and that the operation takes place in reasonable working conditions, with the person in a stable posture.

Screening Exercise

Observe the work activity you are assessing and compare it to the diagram. Where more than one person is involved in the activity, the figures need to be amended accordingly. A person's role(s) should be checked individually if their movements warrant it.

- First, decide which box or boxes the handler's hands pass through when moving the load:
 - If the person's hands enter more than one box during the operation, use the lowest weight as the comparator.
 - Use an in-between weight if the hands are close to a boundary between boxes.
- Then, assess or measure the maximum weight being handled. If it is less than the lowest weight reached, the operation is within the guidelines unless any of the limiting factors below are applicable.

If the handler twists

During the operation reduce the guideline weights if the handler twists to the side during the operation:

- By 10% if twisting beyond 45 degrees
- By 20% if twisting beyond 90 degrees.



Frequent lifting and lowering

The guideline weights are for infrequent operations - up to about 30 operations per hour and:

- Where the pace of work is not forced, adequate pauses to rest and/or the use of different muscles is possible, and
- The load is not supported by the handler for any length of time.

Reduce the guideline weights if the operation is repeated more often. As a rough guide, reduce by:

- 30% if the operation is repeated once or twice per minute;
- 50% if the operation is repeated five to eight times a minute; and
- 80% where the operation is repeated more than 12 times a minute.

Carrying – General Guidelines

What a person can carry safely is often far less than what they can lift. As a general rule, if an employee is required to carry objects for more than 9 meters then the task should be assessed with a view to providing an alternative means of movement.

Pushing and Pulling Trolleys etc – General Guidelines

The task is being performed within the acceptable guidelines if the following figures are not exceeded and the factors listed below under “. Detailed assessment?” are not present:

Descriptor	Men	Women
Force required to stop or start the load	20 kg	15 kg
Sustained force to keep the load in motion	10 kg	7 kg



See '[Good handling technique for pushing and pulling](#)' an HSE pamphlet (IND 143) for some examples of forces required to push or pull loads and the factors that affect them.

CHSU are able to assist with the measurement of forces required to move objects using a spring balance. However, they are readily and cheaply available in hardware stores.

Carrying between different levels

If a person is carrying loads between different levels e.g. up or down a staircase then one hand needs to be free in order to hold onto a banister/handrail to prevent a slip or trip. When ascending or descending a staircase staff should not rush and if possible take a lift. Further information is available in [HS 025 Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls](#)

Using the results: Do I need to make a more detailed assessment?

If, after following the steps above, the weight of the load/ amount of force required is below the guideline figure you have settled on (bearing in mind the reduced limits for twisting and for frequent lifts) you need not do any more in most cases other than record the findings on a standard corporate risk assessment form.

But you will need to make a more detailed assessment if:

- The conditions given for using the guidelines (e.g. that the load can be readily grasped with both hands unless going up or down a staircase) are not met;
- The handler has reduced capacity, e.g. through ill-health or pregnancy;
- The handling operation has to take place with the hands beyond the boxes in the diagram; or

- The guideline figures in the diagram are exceeded.
- Manual handling. Guidance on regulations

HSE has also developed a tool called the [Manual Handling Assessment Chart \(MAC\)](#), to help assess the most common risk factors in lifting, carrying and team handling. You may find the MAC tool useful to help identify higher risk manual handling operations and to help complete detailed risk assessments.

The MAC tool is not suitable for assessments of pushing and pulling tasks. In this case, you should make a more detailed assessment if:

- There are extra risk factors; e.g. slopes, uneven floors, confined spaces, poor grip, low slip resistance between footwear and floor;
- The handler cannot push or pull the load whilst keeping their hands between knuckle and shoulder height;
- The load has to be moved for more than about 20 m without a break; or
- The guideline figures in the table are likely to be exceeded.

[A useful template for a full assessment complete with checklist](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/pushpull/assessment.htm) is available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/pushpull/assessment.htm>

Are you saying I mustn't exceed the guidelines?

- No. The risk assessment guidelines are not 'absolute limits' for lifting (or pushing and pulling).
- But work outside the guidelines is likely to increase the risk of injury significantly, so you should examine it closely for possible improvements.
- You should also remember that you must make the work less demanding if it is reasonably practicable to do so.
- Your main duty is to avoid lifting operations that involve a risk of injury.

Where it is not practicable to do this, you should assess each lifting operation and reduce the risk of injury to the lowest level reasonably practicable. As the risk of injury goes up you must look at the operation more closely and more regularly to make sure the assessment is still valid and that the risk of injury has been sufficiently reduced.

4.0 Other Information and links

[HS 002](#) Responsibilities Policy

HSE Website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm>

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 and Guidance. L23

Manual Handling: Guidance on Regulations. HSE booklet ISBN 0 11 886335 5.

Work Related Upper Limb Disorders: A Guide to Prevention. HSG60

HSE - Manual handling assessment chart (MAC) tool

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac/index.htm>

HSE - Doing a risk assessment

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/pushpull/assessment.htm>