

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

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

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

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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	provide equipment that is more suitable for the task?	<input type="checkbox"/>
is it well maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	carry out planned preventive maintenance to prevent problems?	<input type="checkbox"/>
are the wheels on the device suited to the floor surface?	<input type="checkbox"/>	change the wheels, tyres and/or flooring so that equipment moves easily?	<input type="checkbox"/>
do the wheels run freely?	<input type="checkbox"/>		
is the handle height between the waist and shoulders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	provide better handles and handle grips?	<input type="checkbox"/>
are the handle grips in good order and comfortable?	<input type="checkbox"/>		
are there any brakes? If so, do they work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	make the brakes easier to use, reliable and effective?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Record any additional problems related to handling aids here</i>		<i>Record any additional solutions related to handling aids here</i>	

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