



University of
St Andrews

University guidance for safe manual handling operations

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Policy commitments

1. The overarching commitments set out in the University's general Health and Safety Policy apply. The general policy can be found here: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/environmental-health-and-safety-services/H&S-Policy-2017.pdf>
2. For the purposes of this policy, the University recognises the importance of maintaining the safety and welfare of staff, students and visitors whose role includes Manual Handling Operations (MHO). It is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the Manual Handling Operations 1992 (MHOR). This includes the completion of risk assessments for MHO, and the provision of appropriate training in safe manual handling.

Arrangements

1. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities set out in the University's general Health and Safety Policy apply.

For the purposes of this policy:

- a) Each School or Unit will implement the Regulations in their area of remit. The Head of School or Unit has overall responsibility for this.
- b) The safety co-ordinator in each School or Unit will normally assist in identifying operators and publicising/monitoring attendance at training events.
- c) Environmental, Health and Safety Services (EHSS) will provide group or individual training for new staff, as a refresher for established staff, and as otherwise required. They will also maintain a Moodle online training course to support operators and risk assessors.
- d) Staff are responsible for attending training that is organised for them, and for alerting their line manager, safety co-ordinator or EHSS at an early stage if they feel ill effects from MHO.

Guidance

1. Definitions

Manual handling is defined in legislation as 'the transporting or supporting of a load by one or more workers'. This includes lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying and moving loads.

Staff, students and visitors engaged in MHO will be referred to in University policy and guidance as 'Operators'.

2. The importance of manual handling safety

In 2016/17, manual handling injuries accounted for 22% of injuries reported to the HSE under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013). Slips, trips and falls, which are often closely associated with MHO, accounted for 29%. (Source: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causinj/index.htm>). So if someone's role includes a significant amount of manual handling, he/she is potentially exposed to the most common types of serious injury that occur in the workplace.

Musculoskeletal injuries sustained from MHO can include back injuries, pulled/strained muscles, hernias and others. They can result in severe discomfort and extended periods away from work. Injuries might be *acute* (an immediate effect of a particular MHO) or *chronic*

(cumulative injuries resulting from long-term repetitive strain or incorrect manual handling techniques).

It is very important not to underestimate either the ease with which injuries can occur, or their potential severity. As injuries are likely to worsen with repeated manual handling, employees should inform their line manager/safety co-ordinator/EHSS promptly when an incident occurs.

3. Employer and Employee Obligations

To comply with MHOR, employers must:

- a) Identify the manual handling operations (MHO) undertaken by employees
- b) Make an initial appraisal of the MHO to determine whether they pose a significant risk of injury
- c) Avoid MHO where reasonably practicable
- d) Carry out a full risk assessment for unavoidable MHO that pose a significant risk, taking into account the load, task, working environment and individual capability of the operators
- e) Implement control measures to remove or reduce the risk of injury to the lowest level that is *reasonably practicable*.

In the context of the MHOR, compliance with the term 'reasonably practicable' would be achieved where it could be shown that the cost of further preventative measures would be grossly disproportionate to the benefits gained from their introduction.

Employees have a general obligation under legislation to:

- a) follow appropriate systems of work laid down for their safety (e.g. be aware of the risk assessment and follow the precautions set out in it)
- b) make proper use of equipment provided for their safety (e.g. use a trolley if one is available)
- c) cooperate with their employer on health and safety matters (e.g. by abiding by their training)
- d) take care to ensure that their activities do not put others at risk (e.g. by not lifting a heavy load where it could fall and injure another person, or not leaving an obstruction or slippery patch on the floor where an operator could slip or trip).

4. Risk assessments

General guidance on writing risk assessments can be found at:

<https://moody.st-andrews.ac.uk/moodle/course/view.php?id=3582>

To comply with legislation, a manual handling risk assessment must be 'suitable and sufficient'. For most MHO, a 'generic' risk assessment which draws together common threads of broadly similar operations will suffice. Separate risk assessments are likely to be needed for unusual or difficult operations (e.g. moving a grand piano).

While legislation requires these to be made in advance where risks are foreseeable, operators and supervisors may often have to make rapid re-assessments during an MHO. These often suggest ways in which the existing risk assessment can be improved.

Advice and training on writing risk assessments can be obtained from EHSS on request.

5. Keeping safe during MHO: Practical guidance for operators and assessors

See the Moodle manual handling course prepared by EHSS, and links to Health and Safety Executive guidance, at:

<https://moody.st-andrews.ac.uk/moodle/course/view.php?id=4379>

Note that no operator should attempt to move a load if they are in any doubt about their ability to do so safely. Follow the guidance set out in the course above, by splitting loads, requesting help, using mechanical aids, etc.

6. Training

Further hands-on manual handling training can be provided by EHSS.

7. Health issues

For health issues arising from MHO, contact occhealth@st-andrews.ac.uk or ehss@st-andrews.ac.uk.

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