

Manual handling

In a report carried out for the Health & Safety Executive based on self-reported work related illnesses during the years of 2001 and 2002, over 1.1 million people complained of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) being caused by a current or past work experience. This report concluded that an estimated 12.3 million working days were lost due to MSDs and that on average each sufferer took twenty days off work in any 12-month period.

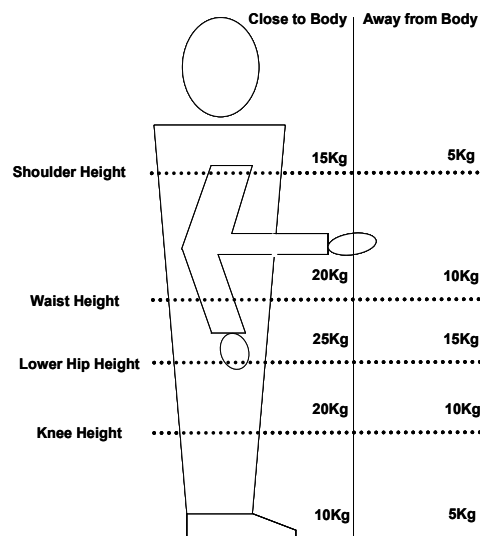
In 1992, the Manual Handling Operations Regulations were released (these have been updated in 2002). Manual handling covers some activities that are mentioned in the following list.

- Lifting objects.
- Lowering objects.
- Carrying objects.
- Pushing objects.
- Animate and inanimate objects.

These updated Manual Handling Regulations require that employers, as far as is reasonably practical, ensure that employees are involved in any activities that may cause or involve a risk of them being injured. The regulations require that a risk assessment be made to clearly identify the tasks and associated risk and what procedures can be effectively put in place to reduce or eliminate the risk.

The diagram depicts the basic guidelines for the lifting and lowering of objects with a good firm safe grasp of the object. It therefore also makes sense that the object be manufactured and packaged in such a way that aids safe manual handling.

The Health & Safety Executive have produced a tool designed to help



Health & Safety personnel called the Manual Handling Assessment Charts (commonly referred to as the MAC) which assesses the type of load, movement and frequency of the action. Once these details are known an assessment can take place. Further information on manual handling and the MAC can be found at www.hse.gov/msd.

Note

Manual handling also needs to take into account the frequency and the repetitions that are required to perform the task.

Quick checklist

- Before the lift and move any load, check first to ascertain that the load actually needs to be moved.
- Size up the job, to ensure that you understand the nature of the lift or work.
- Could the lift be easily achieved with the use of mechanical and electrical lifting equipment?
- Check the object for its weight, type of object, its stability and its centre of gravity.
- How heavy is the load, if it is too heavy for you to safely lift – Get help.
- Is the proposed lift route free from any slip or trip hazards?
- Are there plenty of rest stops to provide you with a rest station if required?
- Know when to ask for help.