



# Manual Handling

In the UK, 54 million working days are lost each year because of pain, strain and injuries to the back. Nearly all jobs involve some form of manual handling which includes lifting, pulling, pushing and carrying a range of objects. Use of poor techniques to move materials is the most common cause of injury at work.

Injuries to the back, shoulders, neck, hands, arms and feet mostly result from moving heavy or awkward loads, restricted space, carrying loads up and down stairs and awkward movements such as reaching, stooping and twisting.

The simple steps below will help you to prevent injuries caused by manual handling, you may wish to use them as a safety checklist.

**STEP 1** Think about all the activities in your workplace which involve staff moving materials and assess whether such manual handling is really necessary, for example could you use lifting aids such as trolleys, lift trucks, hoists, chutes or roll cages?

**STEP 2** If you can't avoid manual handling, then you need to assess the risks associated with each task involving movement of materials, considering steps 3 - 7 below.

**STEP 3 Think about the load**

- if it is heavy, - consider breaking it up or ordering smaller packages?
- if it is difficult to grasp or could shift during carrying - consider placing the load in a container for carrying or binding it together before moving
- if it is awkward - consider using another person to assist, or the use of a trolley

**STEP 4 Think about the task**

- if it involves twisting, stooping or reaching - consider rearranging the storage facilities by providing more space or shelving or reorganising shelves so that the heaviest items are kept at a height between mid thigh and mid-chest. Consider also the use of stepladders or platforms for access to higher shelves.
- if it involves long distance carrying - consider rearranging the layout of the workplace to minimise travel by arranging delivery and storage to be as near as possible to the point of use or consider using a trolley or powered truck.

- if it involves repetitive movements - consider varying the work to ensure that one set of muscles can rest while another works.

**STEP 5 Think about the working environment**

- remove any obstructions in the areas where people need to carry materials and ensure that there are no tripping hazards.

- ensure that lighting levels are adequate.

- if there are steps or ramps - consider use of more than one person or the use of chutes, hoists, or conveyors.

**STEP 6 Think about the physical capability of your staff**

- ensure the staff you are asking to handle materials are capable of doing so - consider those who are pregnant, or who have a physical weakness.

- train all staff in the safe lifting technique and in the safe procedures you have identified for moving materials.

- instruct staff on the correct clothing and footwear to use.

- provide protective shoes, hats and gloves where necessary.

**STEP 7** Remember to assess any new manual handling tasks.

*please turn over*



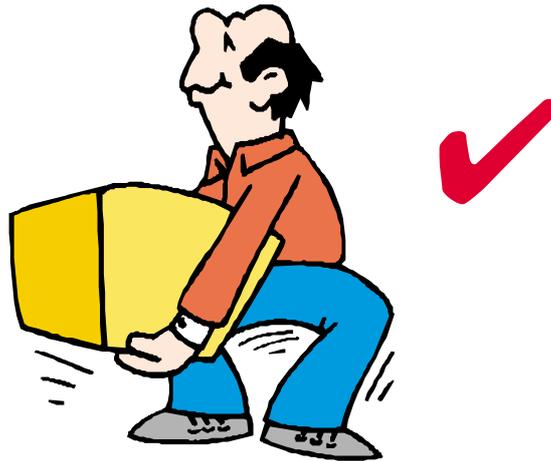
# The Safe Lifting Technique

## 1. Stop and Think

- Do I need help?
- Where is the load going?
- Are there any aids to help me?

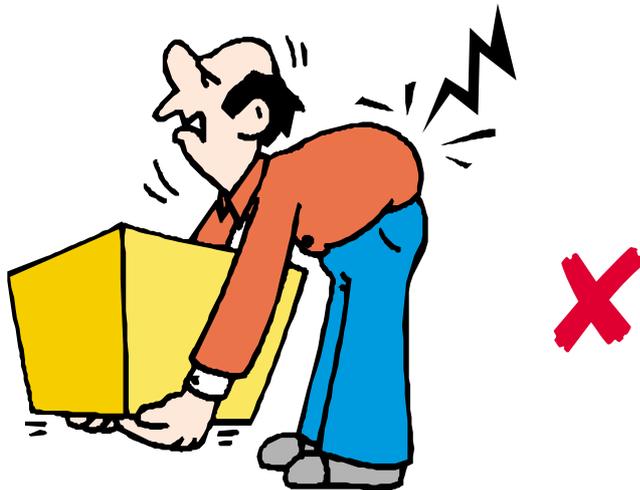
## 2. The Lift

- Feet apart
- Leading leg forward
- Bend the knees
- Lift in stages
- Keep back straight
- Keep load close to body
- Lean forward a little for good grip
- Keep shoulders level
- Get a firm grip
- Put down first, then adjust



## 3. Don't

- Jerk
- Overstretch
- Twist
- Lift loads which are too heavy



### ■ For Further Information:

*Manual Handling - Solutions You Can Handle*  
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