Toolbox talk

Manual handling

Avoid it, assess it, reduce it

10 minutes

For: Anyone who lifts, carries, pushes, pulls or lowers materials, tools or equipment on site

Why it matters

Lifting and carrying are part of nearly every job on site, and getting it wrong can injure your back and joints. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 say employers must avoid hazardous manual handling so far as reasonably practicable, assess what can't be avoided, and reduce the risk. There are no legal weight limits, so the HSE guideline weights are not safe limits.

Key points

1. First ask: does this need lifting by hand at all? Can a machine or aid do it?
2. Use the aids provided, like hoists, pallet trucks and lift trucks.
3. Think TILE: the task, the individual, the load and the environment.
4. Task: holding loads away from you, twisting, stooping, reaching up or repeating lifts adds risk.
5. Individual: new, young or older workers and people with health problems may be more at risk.
6. Load: heavy, bulky, unstable, hard to grip, sharp or hot loads are harder to handle.
7. Environment: bumpy, slippery or uneven floors and poor lighting all add risk.
8. Don't lift more than you can easily manage. Get help or split the load.

Sources: HSE: Manual handling at work - a brief guide (INDG143); HSE: Manual handling at work; HSE: Good handling technique.

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Do

- Plan the lift: where is it going, is the route clear, do you need help?
- Stand with feet apart, one leg slightly in front.
- Keep the load close to your waist and your head up.
- Turn by moving your feet, not by twisting your back.
- Put the load down, then adjust its position.

Don't

- Don't lift by hand when an aid is available.
- Don't jerk or snatch the load. Move smoothly.
- Don't twist or lean sideways while lifting.
- Don't flex your back further once the lift has started.
- Don't keep quiet if a task looks too heavy or awkward. Tell your supervisor.

Ask the group

- What do we lift by hand on this job that a hoist, trolley or other aid could do?
- Which loads on this site are hardest to grip or carry, and why?
- Where are the routes we carry things along uneven, slippery or badly lit?
- What would you do if you were asked to carry something you can't easily manage?

If it goes wrong: If you feel pain or hurt yourself while handling, stop straight away, get first aid and tell your supervisor so it can be recorded and the task looked at again.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____ Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Go further: Check a load against HSE guideline weights

Sources: HSE: Manual handling at work - a brief guide (INDG143); HSE: Manual handling at work; HSE: Good handling technique.

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Attendance register

Manual handling

Site / project

Date and time

Presented by

Company

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature

Follow-up actions

Quick check

Manual handling

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. What is the first step under the manual handling rules?

- [ ] Lift with your legs
- [ ] Avoid hazardous manual handling where reasonably practicable
- [ ] Wear gloves

2. What does the E in TILE stand for?

- [ ] Environment
- [ ] Equipment
- [ ] Effort

3. Where should you hold a load while lifting?

- [ ] At arm's length
- [ ] Above your shoulders
- [ ] Close to your waist

4. You need to turn while carrying a load. What should you do?

- [ ] Twist at the waist
- [ ] Move your feet to turn
- [ ] Lean sideways

5. Are the HSE guideline weights safe limits?

- [ ] Yes, anything under them is safe
- [ ] No, they are guidelines, not safe limits
- [ ] They only apply to office work

Sources: HSE: Manual handling at work - a brief guide (INDG143); HSE: Manual handling at work; HSE: Good handling technique.

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Avoid hazardous manual handling where reasonably practicable

The order is avoid, then assess, then reduce the risk.

2. Environment

TILE is task, individual, load and environment.

3. Close to your waist

HSE says keep the load close to your waist for as long as possible.

4. Move your feet to turn

HSE says turning by moving your feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.

5. No, they are guidelines, not safe limits

HSE says the regulations set no weight limits and the guidelines are not safe limits.

Sources

- HSE: Manual handling at work - a brief guide (INDG143)
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf
- HSE: Manual handling at work
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/index.htm
- HSE: Good handling technique
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/good-handling-technique.htm

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

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Think before you lift

1. **Use an aid if you can**
2. **Keep the load close**
3. **Move your feet, don't twist**

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Sources and qualifications

Manual handling

Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE INDG143: Manual handling at work

Avoid-assess-reduce hierarchy, no legal weight limits, task/individual/load/environment factors and aids; talk sheet and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf

S2. HSE: Good handling technique

Planning the lift, keeping load close, stable position, avoiding twisting and seeking help; Do/Don't and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/good-handling-technique.htm