



COURTENELL

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Your Safety Matters

This information letter is distributed to those people who are ensuring that their workplace is safe and healthy. This includes members of WHS Committees, WHS Representatives, Safety Officers, Supervisors, Managers and Directors. "Your Safety Matters" (formerly "Committee Member") is a free information letter which has been distributed since 1996.

How to Identify Hazardous Manual Tasks

Manual handling is the cause of 29% of workplace injuries making it the most common cause of injury in NSW workplaces (NSW Workers Compensation Statistical Bulletin 2014- 15). Managers, Supervisors, HSRs, and Health & Safety Committee members could help by using the following steps.

Observe manual tasks in your workplace

Looking at how people actually work and focussing on their postures and movements can help to identify hazardous manual tasks. A manual task is hazardous if it involves any of the following characteristics (see examples in pages 7-10 of the Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice):

- repetitive or sustained force
- high or sudden force
- repetitive movement
- sustained and/or awkward posture
- exposure to vibration.

Consult your workers

Workers who perform manual tasks can provide valuable information about discomfort, muscular aches and pains that can signal potential hazards. For example, you could ask workers to identify tasks that:

- are difficult to do (or appear harder than they should be)
- are very tiring (muscle fatigue reduces work capacity)
- are awkward or dangerous (for example, difficulty controlling loads)
- cause discomfort.

Review available information

Review records of workplace injuries and incidents, inspection reports and any workers compensation claims made for manual handling injuries. Also gather information and advice about hazardous manual tasks and risks relevant to your industry and work activities. This information may be available from SafeWork NSW, Safe Work Australia, industry associations, unions, technical specialists and safety consultants.

Look for trends

You may be able to identify trends or common problems from the information you collect. Perhaps workers in a particular location are exposed to more hazardous manual tasks than in other areas and this could indicate a problem with the design and layout of that work area or the way work is carried out there.

The recommendations above are drawn from pages 6/10 of the Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice –Safe Work Australia. See those pages for more detail. This Code is the copyright of Safe Work Australia and is licensed for use under Creative Commons licence Attribution-Non-commercial 3.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit; creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/au/

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