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MANUAL HANDLING
BIGGA’S Health & Safety series produced by Xact

Manual Handling is defined as ‘any transporting or supporting of a load, including pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying or moving by hand or bodily force’. We all carry out manual handling in our daily lives e.g., lifting golf clubs/carrying items at work. Manual handling has the potential to cause injury if loads are not lifted/moved correctly. Some injuries may be relatively minor e.g., muscle/joint strains that clear up in a few days. More serious or chronic injuries may result in people having to change jobs or even blight their quality of life due to recurrent pain. Once joints/discs in the spine are damaged a full recovery isn’t always possible and pain/restriction of movement can result. It is therefore important when carrying out manual handling that the correct handling procedures are adhered to.

Manual Handling at work is subject to H&S regulations. The Regulations require employers to assess the risks and put procedures in place to minimise risk of injury. Employees have a duty to follow procedures, make proper use of equipment provided and generally co-operate with the employer on H&S matters.

Important steps to be considered when carrying out a Manual Handling task:

STOP AND THINK Can I lift the load? Plan the lift/move by checking the weight of the load and the route. Is the route free from obstruction? Can the load be split up into smaller parts?

DO I NEED HELP? Can you lift the load on your own? If not, who/what is available to assist.

STAND CLOSE TO THE LOAD Wear appropriate footwear. Feet apart, unlock the knees creating a stable base for lifting.

LOWER YOUR BODY TO THE LOAD, TAKE A FIRM GRIP Move the load close to your body. Your waist should be close to the height of the load before commencing lifting.

LOOK UP You always see a weightlifter’s face.

STAND UP Using all the relevant muscles naturally, keep the load as close to the body as possible, do not twist, avoid jerky movements.

LIFTING ABOVE SHOULDER/HEAD HEIGHT When lifting above shoulder height, break the lift into two parts, resting load on a suitable weight-bearing surface to change your stance and grip.

PLACING THE LOAD DOWN The reverse procedure should be used i.e. bend the knees, not the back, to place the load down.

STAIRS When carrying loads up/down stairs it’s essential the load doesn’t block your vision. Loads should be broken down into smaller amounts - Loads that cannot be broken down/are too heavy to lift with one hand should be moved using an approved stairs trolley.

TRAVEL DISTANCES Wherever possible mechanical aides should be used to move loads distances.