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Manual Handling: Hazardous Manual Tasks - Are They in Your Workplace?

The good news is that major manual handling injuries in NSW dropped 3%, from 29% in 2015-16 to 26% in 2016-17*. But as SIRA's report shows, manual handling is still the most common cause of workplace injury in NSW.

What can be done about that? The first step is obviously to identify hazardous manual tasks and assess and eliminate or control any risks in those tasks. This article defines the term "*hazardous manual task*". It then puts the major focus on what you need to do to satisfy the legal requirements under the WHS Act and Regulations to inform, train, instruct and supervise workers regarding their hazardous manual tasks.

Information, training, instruction and supervision are administrative control measures that are used if higher levels of control in the hierarchy of control measures (see WHS Regulation 35-36) have not fully covered the risk of injury.

What is a Hazardous Manual Task – Are they in Your Workplace?

The Safe Work NSW *Hazardous Manual Tasks* Code of Practice says:

"A hazardous manual task, as defined in the WHS Regulations, means a task that requires a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing involving one or more of the following:

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

These factors (known as characteristics of a hazardous manual task) directly stress the body and can lead to injury."

The Legal Requirements to Inform, Train, Instruct or Supervise

The WHS Act section 19 (3)(f) requires that the PCBU provide "*any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising*" from carrying out work in the PCBU's workplace.

WHS Regulation 39 puts more detail into the above requirement by stating that the PCBU "*must ensure that information, training and instruction provided to a worker is suitable and adequate having regard to:*

- *the nature of the work carried out by the worker, and*
- *the nature of the risks associated with the work at the time the information, training or instruction is provided, and*
- *the control measures implemented,” and also*
- *“ ..that the information, training and instruction must be provided, so far as is reasonably practicable in a way that is readily understandable by any person to whom it is provided.”*

The Safe Work NSW Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice, on pages 30/31 recommends that;

“Training in the type of control measures implemented should be provided during induction into a new job and as part of an on-going manual task risk control program. Training should be provided to:

- *workers required to carry out, supervise or manage hazardous manual tasks*
- *in-house designers, engineers and officers responsible for the selection and maintenance of plant and/or the design and organisation of the job/task*
- *any health and safety representatives.*

The training should include information on:

- *manual task risk management, including the characteristics of hazardous manual tasks*
- *specific manual task risks and the measures in place to control them*
- *how to perform manual tasks safely, including the use of mechanical aids, tools, equipment and safe work procedures*
- *how to report a problem or maintenance issues*

You should review your training program regularly and also when there is change to work processes, plant or equipment, implementation of new control measures, relevant legislation or other issues that may impact on the way the task is performed.

You should keep records of induction and training given to your workers. The records can include information such as the date of the session, the topics dealt with, and the name and signature of the trainer and each of the workers who attended the session.”

Note:

1. *SIRA Statistical Bulletin 2016/17 NSW Workers Compensation Statistics
2. Courtenell's [Manual Handling: Hazardous Manual Tasks Course](#)

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