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# Hazardous Manual Tasks

## Training Factsheet

For many businesses, manual tasks are an important part of getting the job done. Some of these tasks can be hazardous and are often the most common cause of workplace injuries, or what is referred to as Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs). The provision of training plays a role in protecting workers from harm, but it should not be the first line of defence.

***Legislative requirements for managing hazardous manual tasks (HMT)***

The law states that a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) must follow a risk management approach to control the risk of MSDs.

PCBUs must use the highest level of control measures in the Hierarchy of Control, so far as reasonably practicable (Elimination, Isolation, Substitution and/or Engineering controls). Administrative control measures (information, training, procedures etc.) should only be used if higher orders of control are not reasonably practicable or complement existing control measures in place and further minimise the risk.

This is a legislative requirement under Regulation 60 and part 3.1 of the Workplace Health & Safety Regulations 2012.

The following publications contain more information:

- Work Health & Safety Regulation 2012
- Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2020

## A COMMON APPROACH

A common approach taken by PCBUs is to provide workers with generic 'how to lift' type training (e.g. bend your knees, keep your back straight) at the commencement of their employment and on an ongoing basis. They then rely on workers following these 'safe' techniques or principles as a way to protect them from harm. This type of training is often used as the only control measure.

When this approach is taken, workers are still at risk of injury. Providing 'how to lift' training does not control the actual source of risk, and research evidence has demonstrated that providing 'how to lift' training is not effective in reducing injury risks.[1]

**The Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities developed a national position on 'how to lift' training, and FAQ.**

By taking this approach, a business is not meeting its risk management duties under the WHS legislation.

Instead, a PCBU should be controlling the risk using elimination, isolation, substitution and/or engineering controls. The training provided should then support these measures and systems of work implemented to control hazardous manual tasks.

Page 2 and 3 of this factsheet will provide you with the information on what should be included in hazardous manual task training.

1 Haslam et al., 2007; Hogan et al., 2014; Martimo et al., 2007; Verbeek et al., 2012 as cited Oakman, J., Clune, S. & Stuckey, R., (2019). Work-related musculoskeletal disorders in Australia, 2019. Canberra: Safe Work Australia.

## SUITABLE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING FOR HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

### What should be covered in hazardous manual task training?

The Hazardous Manual Task Code of Practice 2020 outlines that training should cover:

- how to do the work safely – including using relevant mechanical aids, tools, equipment and safe work procedures
- how to report problems or maintenance issues, for example, reporting a faulty mechanical aid.
- The risk management of hazardous manual task in the workplace:
  - identifying the source of HMT
  - assessing HMT risk factors, such as force, postures, repetition, duration, environmental and psychosocial risks
  - control measures used to minimise the risk of injury.

**Note**: *Training should be delivered by a competent person and use a language and examples that are understood by all workers.*

### Who should training be provided to?

Training should be provided to:

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

### When should training be provided?

Training should be provided for workers and contractors when they first start at a workplace and on an ongoing basis.

Training should happen when:

- starting a new job or role
- changing in working conditions, processes or equipment such as automation or new devices
- risk remains after higher order controls are put in place
- introducing new safety measures
- legislation changes

### When should training be reviewed?

Training should be reviewed on a regular basis and when there is change to:

- work processes
- plant or equipment
- implementation of new control measures
- relevant legislation
- reported MSD incident
- other issues that may impact on the way the task is performed

### What records should be kept?

PCBUs should keep clear records of all hazardous manual tasks training and information given to workers. The records can include information such as the date of the session, the topics covered, and the name and signature of the trainer and each of the workers and contractors who attended the session.

# HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASK TRAINING CHECKLIST

The following is the minimum information that should be included as part of your hazardous manual tasks (HMT) training. Workers should be trained and provided information on the following:

## ☐ Workers are trained on the company's HMT risk management procedure

This includes:

- What is a HMT
- How HMT's are identified
- How HMT's are assessed
- How HMT's are controlled
- How HMT control measures are implemented, monitored and reviewed
- How workers are consulted throughout the entire risk management process.

For further information on HMT risk management, refer to:

- Hazardous manual tasks Code of Practice 2020
- Guidance materials and resources available on SafeWork SA website
- HMT Systems-Self-Assessment tool
- HMT Risk Management Process
- HMT Identification tool
- HMT Risk Assessment and Control tool

## ☐ Workers are trained and provided information on HMT risk factors and the source of the risk

This includes:

- HMT risk factors - *These are things that can lead to MSDs*
- How to identify and report any HMT risk factors associated with their work tasks
- The source of risk associated with HMTs - *These are things that are responsible for a risk factor being present.*
- Measures implemented to address the source of risk

**HMT risk factors**

- Repetitive or sustained forces
- High or Sudden forces
- Sustained or awkward postures
- Repetitive movement
- Exposure to vibration
- Duration of the task (when one or more of the above risk factors is present)
- Mental stress / work pressure

**Sources of the risk**

- Workplace design and layout
- Systems of work including organisational and psychosocial factors e.g. pace of work, lack of control
- Work environment e.g. poor lighting
- The nature, size, weight or number of persons, animals or things involved in the task.

## ☐ Workers are trained in specific manual task risks and the measures in place to control them

This includes:

- Information on which manual tasks have been determined to be hazardous
- Information and training on the specific control measures in place for each HMT
- Training on how to perform manual tasks safely, including the use of mechanical aids, tools, equipment and safe work procedures (This does not mean "how to lift" type training)

## ☐ Workers are trained on how to report hazards and maintenance issues

This includes:

- Training on the internal hazard reporting procedure
- Training on how to report any HMT related concerns



*This material has been adapted from Hazardous manual task systems self-assessment tool from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and SafeWork New South Wales.*
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