

Manual handling training courses

8

This sheet is aimed at employers who arrange training on manual handling. The recommendations here will help you get value for money from training. They are based on recent research on manual handling training commissioned by HSE.

First, avoid or reduce the manual handling risk, only then consider training to reduce the risk further. The emphasis in training should be on changing attitudes and behaviour and promoting risk awareness among workers and managers, so that workers assess risks and report problems. You should never use training in handling techniques to get round problems such as unsuitable loads, bad working conditions or a lack of handling aids. Effective training will complement a safe system of work, and has an important part to play in reducing the risk of manual handling injury. It is not a substitute for a safe system of work.

Before organising the training

- Ensure you have taken all measures to avoid or control manual handling.
- Ensure the training fits the job, that there is management commitment for the training and that the lessons learned will be put into practice.
- Keep a record of who requires training, who has received training, when it took place, what was covered and what follow-up is needed.

Meet the trainer in advance

- If the training company is new to you, you should talk to other clients or ask for references. A trade association or companies in a similar industry to your own may be able to help.



- The employer has a responsibility to ensure the trainer is competent. However, it is for the trainer to demonstrate they can be effective.
- Make sure the trainer knows what manual handling jobs your workplace has, what lifting aids are available and how they are used.
- A risk assessment should show the tasks for which training is essential. Tell the trainer about these and have them watch the jobs before the training. Doing this will ensure the course is relevant and the workers can use what they have learnt.
- Will the course last long enough to properly cover all the topics? Often this will mean longer than a half day.
- Agree with the trainer how to evaluate the impact of the training

course in changing behaviours in the workplace.

- Agree a follow-up visit by the trainer so they can correct any bad habits.

What makes an effective training course?

The law does not set a syllabus for manual handling training. The research mentioned earlier suggests that a good, effective, manual handling training course would:

- aim to change attitudes and behaviour and promote risk awareness among workers and managers;
- give trainees the skills to assess risk and report problems about manual handling, including information

about the company's reporting procedures;

- teach good manual handling and lifting principles;
- encourage them to use these principles to review and deal with unfamiliar tasks;
- incorporate tasks familiar to the workers in their workplace and refer to manual handling outside work;
- emphasise the benefits of being physically fit. Evidence suggests that maintaining physical fitness may reduce the risk of injury.

How should the training be delivered?

The best size for a training group is 8–12. Trainers should ask in advance about the trainees' basic level of awareness of manual handling, their language skills (do they understand enough English to take part meaningfully), their physical fitness and whether there are any pre-existing injuries.

The trainer should use relevant examples from their workplace and give time for trainees to practice what they have learnt.

How often should training be given?

There is no firm rule about this. You will need training if new lifting aids are introduced, or there are changes to the method of work. To maintain skills and awareness, refresher courses should be run; it might be useful to combine these with a review of the risk assessment.

Want to know more?

For information about back pain and other musculoskeletal disorders, visit: hse.gov.uk/msd

For information about the Better Backs campaign, visit: www.hse.gov.uk/msd/campaigns

Or call HSE's Infoline on 0845 345 0055 for further information

Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended): Guidance on Regulations L23 (Third edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 978 0 7176 2823 0

The HSE research on manual handling will be published online later in 2007. There will be a link to it from www.hse.gov.uk/msd