
A Practical Guide to Manual Handling Assessments.



Background

The **Manual Handling Operations Regulations** came into force because of the huge burden of injury - chiefly serious back strains, bruises and cuts to the arms and hands - caused by lifting and carrying accidents in industry. As a result, the Regulations require all employers to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments of manual handling activities in the workplace which cannot either be mechanised or avoided altogether. The assessments must cover each type of operation in which there may be a risk of injury. The purpose is to enable the employer to take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury from those manual handling operations.

Significant findings from these assessments should be recorded and records kept readily accessible while they remain relevant. Risk assessments must also be kept under review so that they continue in step with changing circumstances, remaining valid and relevant as the company itself evolves.

The Assessment Forms included with this manual have been designed to cover all the questions and factors required by the Regulations, with room for some additional information.

It is important to recognise the thrust of the Manual Handling Regulations: that manual handling operations which pose a risk of injury should be eliminated wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so. The risk assessment will first of all help to focus attention on these possibilities. Where it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk of injury (for example, by reorganising the work process, or by using mechanical means) the risk assessment will then assist in identifying ways in which the risks can be reduced to the lowest possible levels.

It is important to consult the Regulations and the official guidance for full advice on the legal requirements, and for comment on the degree of competence required to carry out assessment. Further advice and assistance is also available from **Eighty20 Consulting**. Contact details are at the end of this document.



1. Objectives and Allocation of Priority

The purpose of each assessment is to enable you to:

- (a) Consider the risk of injury from the manual handling operation in terms of the task, the load, the working environment, and individual capability;
- (b) Identify steps which can be taken to remove or reduce the risk of injury;
- (c) Decide on **priorities** for action.

The Assessment Forms go through these stages. A simple allocation of risk can be made (high, medium, low) for each of the four areas (task, load, working environment, individual capability) from which the assessor should be able to draw a general conclusion of risk for the activity, thus allocating priority for any remedial action required.

2. Strategy

Beginning the risk assessment task can be a daunting prospect simply because of the sheer diversity of manual handling operations to be found in every workplace. If the effort is going to be effective, it is necessary to have a clear strategy to follow. Without one, the assessment is in danger of becoming bogged down in trivia.

First (and last) Objective: To isolate and act upon on risks *which could possibly cause injury* to employees.

Manual handling operation - A suggested definition.

A connected and continuous series of one or more of:

- picking up
- carrying
- putting down
- pushing and/or
- pulling

of loads with bodily force.



Decide the most practical approach: depending upon how business activities are organised. For example:

- **area-based assessments:** for a discrete and self-contained working area where employees, tend to work in the one area for the greater majority of the time. e.g.: an undertaker's premises.
- **function-based assessments:** one assessment may be made to cover several activities where there are several similar or identical processes spread throughout the premises; e.g.: a forge with 10 similar drop-forging stations.
- **job-based assessments:** one assessment can be made for all aspects of one job so as to cover the jobs of a group of equivalent employees; e.g.: an assessment of janitors' duties or delivery drivers' duties.

3. Record Completion

Completion Of Assessment Record
(To be read in conjunction with the following Risk Assessment Forms)

Stage I - Preliminary

This stage simply identifies whether a particular manual handling operation constitutes a significant risk of injury to any person. If it does not, there is no need to go further. However, in that case, the operation should be kept under review and a date entered for review. If the assessor, on a preliminary look at the operation, thinks there may be a significant risk it is necessary to proceed to Stages II, III and IV of the assessment.

It may be useful at Stage I to note if there are records or evidence which suggest there is an injury problem related to the manual handling operation.

Stage II - Description Of Manual Handling Operation

The assessor should describe the operation as shown. This allows comparisons to be made when subsequent reviews and re-assessments are carried out.



Stage III - Detailed Assessment

The operation should be considered under four headings: load, task, working environment and individual capability.

- 1 [Hazard Present](#) - Against each question, place a tick under 'yes' or 'no' to show whether the hazard indicated in the question is present.
- 2 [Risk Assessment](#) - If the hazard is present, place a tick under the degree of risk it is thought to present - high, medium, low. This assessment will involve some subjective thinking, but should be based on the assessor's knowledge and experience of harm caused or of potential harm which may be caused by the particular aspect of the operation.
- 3 [Possible Remedial Action](#) - At the time of assessment it may be possible to identify remedial actions and a note should be made of these.

4. Overall Risk Assessment

At the end of each of the four sections a summary can be made of the risk related to the load, task, working environment and individual capability. This is a simple summary based on the predominant numbers of ticks counted in the high, medium, or low risk assessment boxes.



5. Record Completion

Stage IV - Action Sheet

A summary of the overall risk of the operation is first made.

The action sheet should be completed to show immediate and longer term action needed to eliminate or reduce risk of injury so far as reasonably practicable.

Immediate action is indicated for all risks where a 'high' marking has been given, and for some 'medium' markings, particularly if these can be easily and speedily taken.

A target date should be set. When this date should be is determined by the level of risk. This part of the record should be used as an action sheet, showing when action has been completed.



Risk Assessment Form

Stage I - Preliminary

Assessment Reference Number:

1 Manual handling operation assessed:		
	YES	NO
2	Is there a risk of injury in this operation?	
3	If answer to question 2 is 'yes', is the risk significant?	
If the answers to questions 2 and 3 are both 'yes', continue to next stage of assessment.		
If the answer to question 2 is 'no', finish here, but keep the operation under review. Review Date:		
When considering this preliminary stage it may be useful to know whether there have been any:		
Noticeable trends in sickness absence related to manual handling		
Manual handling accidents		
Claims for injury		

Assessment by: (Name)

Signature:

Date: Review Date:



Risk Assessment Form

Stage II - Description Of Manual Handling Operation

Assessment Reference Number:

Date of Assessment:

1 Describe the manual handling operation in detail (including its location):

2 Weight of load(s):

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3 Other details of load(s) (size, shape etc.):

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3 Number of personnel involved:

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5 Date of assessment:

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6 Assessment by: (Name)

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Signature: _____

7 Date:

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Review Date:

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Stage III - Detailed Assessment

Assessment Reference Number:

A THE TASK(S)	HAZARD PRESENT		RISK ASSESSMENT			POSSIBLE REMEDIAL ACTION
	YES	NO	HIGH	MED	LOW	
1 Does the task involve:						
i holding the load away from trunk?						
ii twisting waist or bending body sideways?						
iii stooping?						
iv reaching upwards above shoulders?						
v strenuous pushing or pulling?						
vi unpredictable movement of load?						
vii large vertical movement?						
viii team handling?						
ix frequent physical effort?						
x prolonged physical effort?						
2 Is load handled in such a way that it is necessary to:						
i change grip?						
ii use jerky actions?						
iii apply high force levels?						
iv use only one hand?						
3 Could the feet slip?						
4 If pushing or pulling:						
i are hands positioned on handled load above shoulder height or below waist?						
ii is distance of push or pull excessive?						
5 If carrying:						
i is distance excessive?						
ii does load have to be handled up steps or slopes?						
6 Is the handling:						
i repetitive?						
ii carried out more frequently than once a minute for heavy loads?						
7 Sufficient rest/recovery/ change of activity?						
8 Are there time constraints?						
			HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	

Overall Task Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment Form

Stage III - Detailed Assessment

B THE LOAD	HAZARD PRESENT		RISK ASSESSMENT			POSSIBLE REMEDIAL ACTION
	YES	NO	HIGH	MED	LOW	
i is it heavy?						
ii is it bulky/unwieldy?						
iii difficult to grasp firmly?						
iv unstable?						
v likely to shift its centre of gravity?						
vi offset centre of gravity?						
vii too hot?						
viii too cold?						
ix sharp edged?						
x likely to obscure handler's vision?						
xi are handling instructions unclear?						

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW

Overall **Load** Risk Assessment

C THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT	HAZARD PRESENT		RISK ASSESSMENT			POSSIBLE REMEDIAL ACTION
	YES	NO	HIGH	MED	LOW	
i are there constraints on good posture?						
ii is it necessary to reach over or round obstacles?						
iii steps, slopes, uneven floors?						
iv spillages, rubbish, obstructions?						
v hot/cold/humid conditions?						
vi wet/windy/other adverse weather conditions?						
vii poor lighting conditions?						

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW

Overall **Working Environment** Risk Assessment



Risk Assessment Form

Stage III - Detailed Assessment Assessment Reference Number

D INDIVIDUAL CAPABILITY	HAZARD PRESENT		RISK ASSESSMENT			POSSIBLE REMEDIAL ACTION
	YES	NO	HIGH	MED	LOW	
i. are any personnel less than 18 years or over 55 years?						
ii. could operation be harmful to anyone who is, or has recently been pregnant?						
iii could operation be harmful to anyone with a history of health problems which might affect their handling capability?						
iv is movement or posture hindered by protective equipment or clothing?						
v does operation call for special information or training for safe performance?						

Overall Individual Capability Risk Assessment

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW

Overall Risk Assessment For This Operation

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW



Risk Assessment Form

Stage IV - Action Plan

Actions Proposed To Eliminate Or Reduce Identified Risks:

Assessment Reference No:

1 Immediate Actions:	Target Date:	Action By: (Name)	Completed by: (Name and Date)
2 Longer Term Actions:	"	"	"

Action Plan Prepared up by:

Signature:

Date: Review Date:

For further information on risk assessment services or training, please contact enquiries@eighty20consulting.co.uk or call 07814 010830

