

Manual Handling

Business Name:		ABN:
Business Address:		
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	



RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			<b>Elimination</b> Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	<b>Substitution</b> Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	<b>Engineering</b> Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

  

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
<b>4A</b>	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
<b>3H</b>	Review and approve additional controls for the task parts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
<b>2M</b>	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
<b>1L</b>	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

  

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
<b>Catastrophic</b>	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
<b>Major</b>	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
<b>Moderate</b>	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
<b>Minor</b>	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
<b>Insignificant</b>	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

  

**Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:**  
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

*aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.*

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. Governance, Duties and WHS Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clear allocation of WHS duties under WHS Act 2011 leading to gaps in managing manual handling risks</li> <li>PCBU and officers not exercising due diligence in relation to hazardous manual tasks</li> <li>No documented WHS policy or objectives addressing manual handling at an organisational level</li> <li>Inadequate consultation, representation and participation of workers in decisions about manual handling risk controls</li> <li>Failure to integrate manual handling risk management into broader business planning and change management processes</li> <li>No scheduled review of WHS management system components relevant to manual handling</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and maintain a documented WHS policy that explicitly recognises hazardous manual tasks as a key risk area and outlines organisational commitments to elimination or minimisation of these risks so far as is reasonably practicable</li> <li>Define and document WHS roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for PCBUs, officers, managers, supervisors and workers in relation to manual handling, including requirements for due diligence and reporting</li> <li>Integrate manual handling risk management into the organisation's WHS management system, including planning, implementation, measurement and review, in line with WHS Act 2011 and relevant WHS Regulations and Codes of Practice (e.g. Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice)</li> <li>Implement formal WHS planning process that identifies manual handling as a strategic risk, with measurable objectives, targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) at business unit and site level</li> <li>Introduce a structured consultation framework (e.g. HSRs, WHS committees, toolbox talks) that specifically includes discussion and review of manual handling hazards, risk assessments and control effectiveness</li> <li>Embed WHS and manual handling considerations into organisational change management procedures so that process changes, equipment changes, staffing changes and work re-design cannot proceed without prior risk assessment and approval</li> <li>Undertake periodic officer due diligence briefings on manual handling risk, legal obligations, incident trends and resource requirements to ensure informed decision-making</li> <li>Schedule annual management system reviews and internal audits that include evaluation of the effectiveness of governance and planning arrangements for manual handling risk control</li> </ul>	Medium
2. Risk Management Framework for Hazardous Manual Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a formal, organisation-wide procedure for identifying, assessing and controlling hazardous manual tasks</li> <li>Inconsistent or ad hoc manual handling risk assessments across departments and sites</li> <li>Failure to consider all relevant risk factors (force, posture, repetition, duration, environment, individual characteristics) when assessing manual tasks</li> <li>No structured prioritisation of high-risk manual tasks, leading to critical tasks remaining unassessed or uncontrolled</li> <li>Risk assessments not reviewed after incidents, changes to work processes, introduction of new equipment or significant staffing changes</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop, implement and maintain a documented Hazardous Manual Tasks Procedure aligned with WHS Regulations and the Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice, clearly describing the steps of identify, assess, control and review</li> <li>Standardise a risk assessment tool specifically for hazardous manual tasks that prompts consideration of load characteristics, task demands, work organisation, work environment and individual factors</li> <li>Establish criteria to classify manual tasks by risk level (e.g. low, medium, high, intolerable) and define escalation requirements for high-risk tasks, including senior management review and sign-off</li> <li>Create a central register of identified hazardous manual tasks covering all sites, departments and roles, including assessment dates, assessed risks and agreed control measures</li> <li>Assign responsibilities and timeframes for undertaking and reviewing manual handling risk assessments, ensuring new or changed tasks are assessed prior to commencement where practicable</li> <li>Integrate the manual handling risk assessment process into project planning, procurement, facility design and workforce planning activities so that risks are addressed at the design stage rather than after implementation</li> <li>Implement a structured review trigger system for manual handling risk assessments (e.g. post-incident, post-injury, change in equipment, process change, roster change, introduction of new technology)</li> </ul>	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliance on generic or templated assessments that do not reflect the actual workplace conditions and systems of work</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide practical training and guidance material for managers, supervisors and HSRs on how to conduct and document robust hazardous manual task risk assessments using the organisation's standard tools</li> </ul>	
3. Procurement, Design and Engineering of Plant and Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement decisions based solely on cost without considering manual handling implications (weight, size, handles, mobility, adjustability)</li> <li>Purchase of equipment or furniture that cannot be adjusted to support safe postures (e.g. non-adjustable workstations, trolleys without appropriate handle heights)</li> <li>Lack of involvement of WHS personnel, end-users or ergonomists in specification and selection of equipment that impacts manual handling demands</li> <li>Use of plant and equipment without documented design specifications for load limits, handling requirements or safe use instructions</li> <li>Failure to provide or maintain mechanical aids (e.g. trolleys, pallet jacks, hoists, height adjustable benches) leading to unnecessary manual handling of loads</li> <li>Physical layout and working design that forces excessive carrying distances, awkward access, or storage above shoulder height or below knee height</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a procurement policy that mandates consideration of manual handling and ergonomic requirements in purchasing decisions, including consultation with WHS and end-users before approval</li> <li>Develop standard purchasing specifications for frequently used items (e.g. shelving, boxes, trolleys, mobile equipment, workstations) that include weight limits, adjustability, handle design, wheel type and floor compatibility</li> <li>Require suppliers to provide information on weight, dimensions, manual handling requirements and recommended mechanical aids for products and equipment prior to purchase</li> <li>Incorporate ergonomic and manual handling design criteria into facilities design and refurbishment projects so that storage locations, access routes, workbench heights and clearances reduce the need for hazardous manual tasks</li> <li>Establish a pre-implementation trial and evaluation process for new equipment that involves workers, WHS representatives and supervisors to assess manual handling impacts before full rollout</li> <li>Specify and maintain an appropriate range of mechanical aids for typical loads handled within the organisation, based on risk assessments and task analysis, and ensure availability where and when needed</li> <li>Document and communicate equipment selection and layout decisions in a way that demonstrates compliance with WHS Act 2011 duties to eliminate or minimise risks so far as is reasonably practicable</li> <li>Review existing plant, equipment and layouts periodically to identify opportunities to retrofit engineering controls that reduce manual handling demands (e.g. lift tables, conveyors, slide sheets, adjustable shelving)</li> </ul>	Medium
4. Organisational Work Design and Workload Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workload, staffing levels and scheduling resulting in excessive repetition, sustained postures or insufficient recovery time</li> <li>Inflexible work systems that prevent job rotation or task variation, leading to cumulative manual handling injuries</li> <li>KPIs and productivity targets that implicitly encourage short-cuts or discourage use of mechanical aids and safe handling practices</li> <li>Rosters and shift patterns that exacerbate fatigue, reducing workers'</li> </ul>	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<p>physical capacity and increasing susceptibility to manual handling injuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient consideration of workers' physical capabilities, restrictions or return-to-work plans when allocating tasks</li> <li>• Lack of structured job design review when tasks change, leading to incremental increases in manual handling risks over time</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
5. Policies, Procedures and Safe Systems of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of documented policies and procedures guiding safe manual handling practices across the organisation</li> <li>• Procedures that exist but are outdated, overly generic or inconsistent with current work conditions and legislation</li> <li>• Safe systems of work not clearly defined, making it difficult for supervisors to enforce safe manual handling practices</li> <li>• Over-reliance on informal communication and practice rather than formally developed and communicated procedures</li> <li>• Procedures developed without input from workers, resulting in low practicality and poor adoption</li> <li>• Lack of integration between manual handling procedures and other WHS or operational procedures (e.g. maintenance, cleaning, warehousing, patient handling in healthcare)</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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6. Training, Competency and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers and supervisors not receiving adequate induction or ongoing training about hazardous manual tasks and control measures</li> <li>Training focused solely on generic lifting techniques rather than on the organisation's specific risks, tasks, equipment and procedures</li> <li>No system to verify competency or understanding following manual handling training</li> <li>Inconsistent training coverage across different sites, shifts, labour-hire staff and contractors</li> <li>Lack of access to clear, concise information and signage regarding manual handling risks and safe use of mechanical aids</li> <li>Supervisors unaware of their responsibilities to monitor and correct unsafe manual handling practices</li> </ul>	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium
7. Incident Reporting, Investigation and Corrective Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under-reporting of manual handling incidents, near misses and early signs of musculoskeletal discomfort</li> <li>Ineffective incident investigation processes that fail to identify root causes in systems and management practices</li> <li>Lack of structured follow-up on corrective actions arising from manual handling incidents and investigations</li> <li>Data on manual handling injuries not analysed to identify trends, hotspots or recurring systemic failures</li> <li>Workers perceiving reporting as punitive, leading to concealment of early symptoms and missed opportunities for intervention</li> </ul>	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure to integrate lessons learned from incidents into risk assessments, procedures, training and design decisions</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
8. Consultation, Communication and Worker Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient consultation with workers who perform manual tasks when identifying hazards and developing control measures</li> <li>Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and WHS committees not being actively involved in addressing manual handling issues</li> <li>Inconsistent communication of manual handling risks, controls and expectations across sites and organisational levels</li> <li>Language, literacy or cultural barriers preventing some workers from understanding manual handling information</li> <li>Workers not feeling empowered to raise concerns or suggest improvements in relation to manual handling systems</li> <li>Changes to manual handling controls or procedures implemented without adequate worker input or explanation</li> </ul>	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low
9. Maintenance, Housekeeping and Workplace Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanical aids, trolleys and handling equipment not maintained, inspected or repaired in a timely manner, increasing manual exertion</li> <li>Poor housekeeping leading to cluttered pathways, uneven surfaces or blocked access, forcing awkward postures or extended carrying distances</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate environmental conditions (lighting, temperature, floor surfaces, space constraints) that contribute to poor body mechanics and increased manual handling risk</li> <li>Lack of a formal system for workers to report defects or issues with manual handling equipment and for timely rectification</li> <li>Inconsistency in storage practices across departments resulting in heavy or frequently-used items being stored at unsafe heights or distances</li> <li>Temporary workarounds or makeshift equipment being used in place of properly designed handling aids due to poor equipment availability or maintenance</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
10. Health Monitoring, Early Intervention and Return to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of systems for early identification of musculoskeletal discomfort or strain related to manual handling</li> <li>Workers continuing to perform hazardous manual tasks despite early symptoms, leading to worsening injuries</li> <li>Inadequate coordination between WHS, HR and injury management functions, resulting in fragmented responses to manual handling injuries</li> <li>Return-to-work programs not adequately considering manual handling risks, leading to re-injury or delayed recovery</li> <li>No access to competent health professionals for advice on manual handling-related injuries, task modification or reasonable adjustments</li> <li>Failure to track and review health and injury data to inform manual handling risk management decisions</li> </ul>	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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SAMPLE

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES**

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

**LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES**

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

**Queensland & Australian Capital Territory**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011  
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>  
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>  
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

**Victoria**

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004  
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017  
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

**New South Wales**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025  
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

**Western Australia**

Work Health and Safety Act 2020  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022  
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

**Northern Territory**

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011  
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>  
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

**Safe Work Australia Links**

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>  
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

**South Australia**

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)  
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

**Model Codes of Practice**

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

**Tasmania**

Work Health and Safety Act 2012  
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012  
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012  
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.