

Manual Handling and Hazardous Manual Tasks

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			Elimination Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	Substitution 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.	Engineering 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:	
4A	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.
3H	Review and approve additional controls before task starts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
2M	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
1L	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
Catastrophic	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
Major	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
Moderate	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
Minor	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
Insignificant	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. WHS Governance, Policy and Legal Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a documented manual handling and hazardous manual tasks policy referencing WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulations Inadequate definition of what constitutes a hazardous manual task within the organisation Lack of clear assignment of responsibilities for managing manual handling risks (PCBUs, officers, workers, HSRs) Failure to consult workers and Health and Safety Representatives on manual handling risk controls Policies not updated to reflect current Safe Work Australia Codes of Practice and Australian Standards (e.g. AS/NZS 3760 for electrical equipment where relevant to mechanical aids) Inadequate integration of manual handling requirements into broader WHS management system and risk registers No clear policy on avoiding or minimising manual lifting where practicable (e.g. preference for mechanical aids, redesign of tasks) Failure to set organisational expectations regarding overloading controls and maximum load handling guidelines 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and endorse a manual handling and hazardous manual tasks policy aligned with the WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulations, and relevant Codes of Practice Define hazardous manual tasks in organisational procedures, including tasks involving lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, stacking, unstacking, palletising, and handling awkward or bulky items Assign clear roles and responsibilities for management, supervisors and workers for identifying, reporting and controlling manual handling risks Implement a formal consultation procedure with workers and HSRs for the development, review and implementation of manual handling controls Integrate manual handling risks into the corporate WHS risk register with periodic review cycles and documented ratings Establish a documented hierarchy-of-control approach that prioritises elimination and substitution of manual handling (e.g. mechanical aids, redesign) over reliance on technique alone Mandate review of manual handling policies every 2–3 years or following incidents, regulatory changes or significant plant/task changes Ensure organisational policies clearly prohibit unsafe overloading of individuals and teams, and specify requirements to assess the weight and stability of items before lifting or moving them Include manual handling expectations and responsibilities in position descriptions, contractor agreements and induction materials 	2M
2. Manual Handling Risk Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a systematic process to identify and assess hazardous manual tasks across all sites and work groups No documented risk assessments for high-risk manual handling tasks such as lifting heavy boxes or crates, bulky construction materials, or moving machinery parts by hand Ad hoc or informal assessment of loads without consideration of weight, shape, centre of gravity or stability 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal manual handling risk management procedure covering identification, assessment, control and review stages, consistent with the WHS Regulations and Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks Conduct baseline manual handling risk surveys across all departments to identify high-risk tasks (e.g. manual palletising, stacking and unstacking loads, pushing or pulling heavy trolleys, moving large or irregular items) Develop standardised risk assessment templates that specifically consider load weight, bulk, symmetry, grip, distance, frequency, posture, floor condition and environmental factors 	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to assess tasks involving stairs, uneven terrain, heights or confined/awkward spaces Inadequate analysis of cumulative exposure to manual handling (repetition, duration, recovery time) No routine review of existing controls following change management, incidents, near misses or introduction of new materials/plant Poor documentation and version control of manual handling risk assessments leading to outdated controls being applied No integration of manual handling risks into procurement, project planning and scheduling processes 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all tasks involving stairs, ramps, uneven or sloping terrain, working at height, or escalators with bulky or heavy items are specifically assessed and documented Assess cumulative loading arising from repeated lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling tasks, including shovelling and manual labour tasks over a shift Embed manual handling risk reviews into change management for new equipment, changes in materials, revised workflows, or alterations to storage systems Store risk assessments in a central, controlled document management system with defined review dates, version control and user access Integrate manual handling risk assessment into project planning, production scheduling and logistics planning so that high-risk tasks are eliminated or reduced at the design stage Require reassessment of manual handling risks following incidents, reported discomfort, or observable early signs of musculoskeletal disorder 	
3. Task and Job Design for Hazardous Manual Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly designed jobs requiring frequent lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling without rest breaks Tasks that require handling of loads above or below shoulder height, such as hand stacking goods on high levels or stacking boxes above head height Manual handling tasks involving repetitive or sustained bending, twisting, reaching or kneeling, such as shovelling materials or repositioning heavy items Workflows that necessitate moving heavy loads over long distances, upstairs, or across uneven or slippery terrain Processes that require manual transfer of loads to or from conveyor belts, vehicles, mezzanine levels or shelving without engineering assistance Failure to plan team lifting for large or awkward shaped items leading to uncoordinated lifts Task sequencing that combines heavy manual handling with other physically or 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply ergonomics and human-centred design principles to redesign tasks so that loads are kept close to the body, within mid-thigh to mid-chest height wherever possible Minimise the need to hand stack goods on high levels by redesigning racking layouts and using adjustable pallet stands, lift tables, or gravity-fed racking systems Redesign processes to avoid carrying heavy loads long distances or up stairs, including use of lifts, hoists, or alternative access routes Separate manual handling-intensive tasks from other high-demand tasks where possible, and schedule them to allow adequate recovery time Introduce mechanical transfer points (e.g. roller conveyors, chutes, lift-assist devices) to avoid manual loading and unloading of boxes or crates to and from conveyor belts and vehicles Standardise job plans to require team lifts for oversized, awkward or unstable loads, with clear allocation of roles and pre-lift communication requirements Eliminate or significantly reduce manual handling in high-risk environments such as stairs, ladders, mezzanines and uneven terrain by redesigning storage locations and using trolleys, platform lifts, or hoists Implement job rotation plans to reduce prolonged exposure to repetitive or high-force manual tasks such as shovelling and palletising Review and optimise workflow layout (lean layout, U-shaped cells, line-side storage) to minimise unnecessary movement of loads 	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routes for moving loads that include narrow passages, obstructions, low clearances or sharp turns • Requirement to carry heavy loads up or down stairs, or negotiate escalators with bulky items due to lack of lifts or appropriate access routes • Uneven, slippery or unstable floor surfaces causing slips or trips while carrying loads • Inadequate lighting in storage areas, stairwells or loading docks increasing risk when manoeuvring loads • Poorly organised stock leading to urgent, ad hoc manual movements of loads when access is blocked • Inadequate space for safe manual palletising tasks, stacking and unstacking, and sorting of large or irregular items 		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
6. Procurement, Materials and Packaging Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of materials in excessively heavy unit loads (e.g. large bags, over-filled crates or bins) that exceed safe manual handling limits • Ordering materials in formats that are bulky, unstable or do not have adequate handholds, making them difficult to grip and control • Failure to specify weight and ergonomic requirements to suppliers, resulting in inconsistent packaging and load sizes • Receiving deliveries on mixed or poor-quality pallets that require significant double-handling, re-palletising or manual stack/unstick work • Use of packaging that necessitates forceful cutting or tearing, increasing risk of sudden movement or lacerations when opening with cutter knives 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No process for assessing the manual handling implications of new materials, equipment or packaging before approval Irregular or rush deliveries leading to peak manual handling loads and time pressure 			
7. Information, Signage and Load Labelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loads not marked with weight, leading to unplanned overloading of individual workers or team lifts Lack of information on awkward centre of gravity or special handling requirements for irregular items No signage indicating manual handling risks in high-risk areas such as stairwells, loading docks or mezzanines Inconsistent or unclear instructions for safe movement of particular materials (e.g. fragile loads, sharp-edged components, long items) Workers making assumptions about weight based on size or appearance without reliable data Poor visibility of safety information due to language barriers, faded labels or cluttered signage 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L
8. Training, Competency and Supervision in Manual Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers not trained to recognise hazardous manual tasks or early signs of musculoskeletal strain Overreliance on generic 'back care' or single-session manual lifting techniques training without reinforcement or practical application Inadequate training in the safe use of specific mechanical aids, trolleys, pallet jacks, hoists or conveyors Lack of competency assessment for high-risk activities such as coordinating team lifts, handling awkward shaped items, or manual handling in restricted spaces 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisors unaware of their role in monitoring manual handling practices and intervening in unsafe behaviours No training for safe use of cutting tools when opening packaging, leading to sudden load shifts or awkward postures Insufficient induction for new and young workers regarding limits on manual handling and when to request assistance 		[REDACTED]	
9. Workload Management, Fatigue and Staffing Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive manual handling workload due to insufficient staffing, leading to fatigue and poor technique Peak demand periods causing rushed lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling tasks without adequate breaks Extended shifts or overtime increasing cumulative musculoskeletal loading and risk of strain injuries Lack of planning for high-risk tasks such as off-loading heavy materials without mechanical aids, or moving machinery parts by hand Inadequate provision for two-person or team lifts where required, forcing single-person lifts of heavy loads Failure to adjust manual handling demands for workers returning from injury, or those with known limitations Poor coordination between departments resulting in coinciding manual handling peaks (e.g. simultaneous deliveries, production surges) 		[REDACTED]	2M
10. Contractor and Labour-Hire Management for Manual Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractors and labour-hire workers not inducted into site-specific manual handling risks and controls Assumptions that contractors are fully competent and trained without verification 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent manual handling practices between permanent staff and contractors leading to confusion and unsafe behaviours Contractual arrangements that incentivise speed over safe manual handling (e.g. payment purely by volume moved) Lack of control over contractor supplied equipment used for lifting, carrying or moving loads Poor communication regarding high-risk tasks such as carrying materials up stairs, negotiating escalators with bulky items, or manually pushing/pulling heavy vehicles 		[REDACTED]	
11. Health Monitoring, Early Intervention and Injury Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No system for early reporting of discomfort, pain or near misses related to manual handling tasks Cultural barriers or workload pressure discouraging workers from reporting manual handling issues Lack of access to ergonomic or occupational health advice when musculoskeletal symptoms arise Return-to-work procedures that do not adequately control exposure to manual handling, leading to aggravation of injuries Failure to analyse patterns in sprain/strain and overexertion injuries to identify systemic prevention opportunities Overreliance on personal protective equipment or manual handling training as injury management rather than addressing root causes 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
12. Inspection, Observation and Assurance of Manual Handling Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to regularly verify that manual handling controls are implemented and effective in the field Supervisors not observing or correcting unsafe manual handling practices such 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as overreaching, twisting, or carrying loads on stairs • Inspections that focus only on housekeeping and ignore hazardous manual tasks and equipment condition • No feedback loop from inspections and safety observations into risk assessments and training content • Manual handling behaviours gradually degrading over time as workers revert to old habits under production pressure • Lack of measurable targets or indicators for manual handling safety performance 		[REDACTED]	
13. Environmental and Site Condition Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor or construction environments with uneven terrain, slopes, mud, gravel or debris increasing risk when carrying heavy loads • Adverse weather (rain, heat, wind) affecting grip, footing and worker fatigue during manual handling tasks • Confined areas or congested worksites requiring awkward manoeuvring of loads by hand • Temporary works, scaffolding or pass ways that are not designed with manual handling in mind • Inadequate housekeeping causing trip hazards around stored materials and manual handling routes • Poor control of noise or distractions in areas where coordinated team lifting and communication are critical 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
14. Documentation, Records and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete or inconsistent documentation of manual handling risk assessments, controls and reviews • Difficulties retrieving historical information on incidents, loads handled, or changes to tasks and equipment 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of structured review of manual handling procedures leading to outdated or ineffective controls remaining in place Failure to incorporate lessons learned from incidents, audits or worker feedback into system improvements No formal mechanism to monitor progress against manual handling risk reduction objectives 		<div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>	

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.