

SAFETY TOOLBOX TALK :- HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

A company was convicted and fined \$100,000 after an untrained worker was seriously injured while lifting a 20kg bag of onions.

The 17-year old worker complained of a sharp pain in his back and collapsed a short time after lifting the bag. He never walked again.

What is Hazardous Manual Task:

A hazardous manual task, as defined in the WHS Regulations, means a task that requires a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing involving one or more of the following:

- Repetitive or sustained force
- High or sudden force
- Repetitive movement
- Sustained or awkward posture
- Exposure to vibration.

These factors (known as characteristics of a hazardous manual task) directly stress the body and can lead to injury.

Remember the following:

- **Increased weight equals increased risk.** People differ so it is difficult to define what an unsafe weight is. But if you find a manual task difficult or strenuous, it may be a significant risk for you. Discomfort can be an early warning sign, especially if it persists, reoccurs the next day or persists after the weekend/rostered days off.
- **The risk is not just about weight.** Often the risk is due to a combination of the weight and your posture, such as bending forward, and movements such as holding the load away from the body or twisting, as well as the shape or configuration of the load.
- **Manual tasks can cause gradual wear and tear to the body.** This damage can build up over time.
- **Where repetitive movements or fixed or awkward postures are concerned, the risk of injury is cumulative.** Regardless of how many different tasks a worker performs each day, a significant risk of injury can be present if the total time spent performing similar postures, actions or movements exceeds one hour.

Remember, a small size does not always mean a light load!

SAFETY TOOLBOX TALK :- HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

Workplace health and safety is everyone's responsibility

A Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) has a duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act to provide a safe workplace and systems of work, information, instruction, training and an opportunity for workers to consult about work health and safety. There are regulations which require the PCBU to identify and manage each hazard and risk that is likely to arise from manual handling tasks in the workplace.

A risk assessment should be undertaken to determine level of risk and appropriate controls, giving us the opportunity to discuss issues and negotiate suitable arrangements for reducing manual task injuries.

Some of the controls that could be used are:

- modifying workplace layout and equipment – use lifting aids
- modifying the load – redistribute the weight
- controlling the work environment – like floor coverings, heat, light and space
- redesigning the work patterns – change the frequency and type of tasks done
- making sure everyone has general and task specific training.

As workers, we have a responsibility to protect our own health and safety and that of others affected by our work, and to abide by procedures and policies in relation to workplace safety. We should all be provided with appropriate information and training to allow us to fulfil that obligation.

Don't arch your back—avoid reaching out for an object.
