

Information Sheet

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Information Sheet is to provide information and guidance on how to manage hazardous manual tasks during University related activities and should be read in conjunction with the [Hazard Management](#) chapter of the HSW Handbook.

**Q1 What is a 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 over a period of time
- sustained or awkward posture
- exposure to vibration.

Any of the above factors could directly stress the body and result in an injury.  
The most common injury from manual tasks is a musculoskeletal disorder.

**Q2 What is a musculoskeletal disorder?**

A musculoskeletal disorder (MSD), as defined in the Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice, means an injury to, or a disease of, the musculoskeletal system, whether occurring suddenly or over time. It can be a back injury, a sprained or strained muscle, ligament and tendon, degeneration of a joint or bone and nerve damage.

Musculoskeletal disorders occur in two ways:

1. gradual wear and tear to joints, ligaments, muscles and inter-vertebral discs caused by repeated or continuous use of the same body parts, including static body positions
2. sudden damage caused by strenuous activity, or unexpected movements such as when loads being handled move or change position suddenly.

Injuries can also occur due to a *combination* of these two mechanisms.

**Q3 How can the risk of a musculoskeletal disorder resulting from a hazardous manual task be reduced?**

**Before undertaking the task**, identify if the task could cause an injury.

Consider:

- what the task is and how it is performed;
- the load /object to be moved (e.g. it's weight, shape, size);
- if the work environment could impact on the safe completion of the task.
  - Extremely cold environment (which may affect gripping, reduce sensitivity in cold hands or from wearing gloves)
  - Extremely high temperatures (which may also affect gripping, perspiration on the hands, radiant heat)
  - Humid environment (which may increase discomfort and fatigue, damp/wet objects)
  - Wind (increased force required to handle large objects in windy conditions)
  - Slippery and uneven floor surfaces (which may affect stability of the load and/or your balance/footing)
  - Obstructions (which may be from poor housekeeping, may lead to leaning over or around an object to complete a task)
  - Lighting (which may lead to awkward or sustained posture to improve vision or avoid glare).

**Continued**

HSW Handbook	Hazardous Manual Tasks – Information Sheet	Effective Date:	4 December 2018	Version 2.0
Authorised by	Associate Director HSW	Review Date:	4 December 2021	Page 1 of 4
Warning	This process is uncontrolled when printed. The current version of this document is available on the HSW Website.			

**Q3 How can the risk of a musculoskeletal disorder resulting from a hazardous manual task be reduced? (Continued)**

- If the task requires:
  - Repetitive or sustained force  
(e.g. Using force repeatedly or continually over a period of time to move or support an object.)
  - High or sudden force  
(e.g. Exertion is required. The task is physically demanding. There is jerky or unexpected movements while handling an item or load. The body must suddenly adapt to the changing force.)
  - Repetitive movement over a period of time  
(e.g. Using the same parts of the body to repeat similar movements over a period of time.
  - Sustained or awkward posture  
(e.g. Where part or the whole body is kept in the same position for a prolonged period and/or the posture is unbalanced and/or there are extremes of bending/twisting/squatting/working with arms overhead/kneeling.)
  - Exposure to vibration  
(e.g. Operating equipment where the vibration is transferred to the hand and arm, repetitive shock loads of some tools, sitting in a heavy vehicle for long periods.)
- The suitability of the tools/equipment that you are using to complete the activity (if applicable) e.g. are they fit for purpose?

Where you have identified one or more of the abovementioned risk factors then you should complete a formal risk assessment in accordance with the [Hazard Management](#) Handbook Chapter. This will enable you to minimise the risk and implement appropriate control measures in order to complete the task safely.

**Q4 Can I risk assess similar hazardous manual tasks at the same time?**

If there are a number of similar hazardous manual tasks, they may be assessed together as a group instead of assessing each task individually. e.g. activities requiring handling of animals.  
The [Hazard Management](#) chapter of the HSW Handbook provides additional information on “control banding”.

**Q5 How do I control the risk of a hazardous manual task?**

The [WHS Regulations](#) and [Code of Practice for Hazardous manual tasks](#), require that the risk be eliminated or minimised by working through the hierarchy of control.

This may require a single control measure or a combination of two or more different controls.  
Specific examples of risk control measures which relate to hazardous manual tasks are provided in [Appendix A](#).

The risk assessment process will enable the calculation of a residual risk rating (i.e. after the controls are in place). If there is a residual risk of “high” or “very high” then the activity/plant/chemical is to be referred for the appropriate level of authorisation in accordance with the [Hazard Management](#) to ensure that every avenue for minimisation of the risk has been considered and that they authorise for the activity to continue.

**Q6 How are control measures implemented for Hazardous manual tasks?**

The Supervisor responsible for the implementation of the task, should consult with workers involved in the manual task including their health and safety representative(s) (where relevant) regarding the control measures identified on the risk assessment.

As a guide, if the residual risk is assessed as:

Low risk – information on the control measures is provided during induction.

Medium risk – information on the control measures is provided during induction.

High and very high risk – information on the control measures is provided during induction and additional instruction/proficiency against the Safe Operating Procedure (or equivalent) is to be provided before the worker completes the activity of their own (i.e. unsupervised).

(Additional information is also provided in the HSW Handbook chapter [Provision of HSW information, instruction and training](#))

Supervisors are to ensure all completed risk assessments are available to the workers who conduct the activity in either electronic or hard copy and that workers in their area(s) follow the control measures and safe work procedures.

HSW Handbook	FAQ - Hazardous Manual Tasks	Effective Date:	4 December 2018	Version 2.0
Authorised by	Associate Director, HSW	Review Date:	4 December 2021	Page 2 of 4
Warning	This process is uncontrolled when printed. The current version of this document is available on the HSW Website.			

**Q7 What happens if there is an incident/injury due to a hazardous manual task?**

Any worker who suffers from a work related incident/injury is to report the incident to their Supervisor as soon as possible (e.g. before leaving work) and follow the process [Report a safety issue or incident](#) chapter of the HSW Handbook.

As part of the investigation, the Supervisor is to review the risk assessment and control measures to ensure the measures are adequate in consultation with the relevant workers. Where controls are not sufficient, they will take appropriate corrective action, where required, to prevent a recurrence.

The incidents and any corrective actions are recorded in [UniSafe](#) to ensure that any trends can be identified and any corrective actions recorded are completed.

**If you have a work-related musculoskeletal injury**

Refer to the [Injury management](#) HSW Handbook chapter, which provides information on the Workers compensation and rehabilitation process.

**If you have a musculoskeletal injury (work or non-work related)**

Information is available from the [Injury management](#) Handbook website.  
(i.e. Caring for you knee sprain, low back pain, shoulder pain, soft tissue injury.)

**Q8 Where can I find more information on hazardous manual tasks?**

If you would like more information about hazardous manual tasks please refer to:

- The [Code of Practice for Hazardous manual tasks](#) on the SafeWork Australia website
- your local [HSW contact](#).

There is also an on-line Ergonomics and Manual Handling information session available which provides basic manual handling principles and guidance. <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/hr/hsw/training/>.

HSW Handbook	FAQ - Hazardous Manual Tasks	Effective Date:	4 December 2018	Version 2.0
Authorised by	Associate Director, HSW	Review Date:	4 December 2021	Page 3 of 4
Warning	This process is uncontrolled when printed. The current version of this document is available on the HSW Website.			

**HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS – RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**RISK CONTROL MEASURES (Examples)**

Hierarchy of control		Examples of control measures
Level 1	Elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automate the manual task (such as using remote controls)</li> <li>Deliver goods directly to the point of use to eliminate multiple handling</li> </ul>
Level 2	Substitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace heavy items with those that are lighter, smaller and/or easier to handle</li> <li>Replace hand tools with power tools to reduce the level of force required to do the task</li> </ul>
	Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Isolate vibrating machinery from the user, for example by providing fully independent seating on mobile plant</li> </ul>
	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use mechanical lifting aids (hoist, lifter, gantry)</li> <li>Loading dock levellers</li> <li>Forklifts, pallet trucks</li> <li>Turntables</li> <li>Hand winches, hydraulic pumps and battery powered motors</li> <li>Suspend or support heavy tools where they are used repetitively and in the same place</li> <li>Install trigger locks where the grip has to be sustained for more than 30 seconds</li> <li>Provide workstations that are height adjustable</li> <li>Provide handles, handholds, cut-outs to improve grip</li> <li>Insulate hot/cold items or tools</li> <li>Introduce a conveyor belt or a chute</li> <li>Provide a ramp</li> </ul>
Level 3	Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rotate workers between different tasks</li> <li>Change the work organisation e.g. relocate equipment or items</li> <li>Ensure workload and pace of work is within the ability of the worker (e.g. personal characteristics may need to be considered for each worker)</li> <li>Minimise multiple handling</li> <li>Introduce a second operator</li> <li>Team handling with co-ordinated and planned procedure prior to commencement (e.g. to ensure the load is shared equally, appropriate number of workers proportionate to the weight, enough space for the number of people in the team, similar height and capability where possible)</li> <li>Identify the best working position for the type of work being undertaken</li> <li>Reduce reaching distances</li> <li>Place items used in manual tasks so they are in front of the worker, between waist and shoulder height</li> <li>Push rather than pull the item</li> <li>Provide rest breaks to prevent fatigue and/or overuse</li> <li>Introduce physical/cognitive assessment tools to assist workers who are required to handle/transfer patients/people</li> <li>Introduce mechanical aids to constrain or minimise the movement of an animal before commencing the task</li> <li>Ensuring work areas are clean, tidy and free of clutter or obstacles to prevent workers from adopting awkward postures</li> <li>Document a standard operating procedure (SOP) and include in the induction program for all staff required to perform the task</li> <li>Develop a proficiency based training program if required</li> <li>Train workers to use control measures implemented when carrying out manual tasks</li> </ul>
	Personal protective equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heat resistant gloves for handling hot items</li> <li>Gloves to improve grip</li> <li>Shock absorbent shoes for work on hard concrete floors</li> <li>Non-slip footwear</li> <li>Appropriate clothing that doesn't restrict movement</li> </ul>

For further examples and explanation on the Hazard Management and Risk Control process, please refer to the [Hazard Management Handbook chapter](#) (which also includes the risk assessment templates or WHS legislation - [Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks](#) or [Code of Practice for How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks](#)).

HSW Handbook	FAQ - Hazardous Manual Tasks	Effective Date:	4 December 2018	Version 2.0
Authorised by	Associate Director, HSW	Review Date:	4 December 2021	Page 4 of 4
Warning	This process is uncontrolled when printed. The current version of this document is available on the HSW Website.			