MANUAL HANDLING CODE OF PRACTICE

1. Introduction

For some years national statistics have shown that more than a quarter of accidents reported are associated with the manual handling of loads. Sprains and strains are common together with cuts and bruises. No type of work is immune from this source of injury, whether in offices, workshops, laboratories, kitchens, delivery activities etc.

Furthermore musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most common occupational illness in the UK, affecting one million people a year. They include problems such as low back pain, joint injuries and repetitive strain injuries of various sorts.

Physical risk factors such as force, posture and repetition can be harmful to the body and can lead to musculoskeletal disorders. However, research has shown that psychosocial risk factors can lead to musculoskeletal disorders and also need to be taken into account. For example, there can be stress-related changes in the body (such as increased muscle tension) that can make people more susceptible to musculoskeletal problems; or individuals may change their behaviour, for example continuing to work without sufficient rest breaks to try and cope with deadlines.

"MSD can be a manifestation of stress and can be made worse due to psychosocial factors as evidence suggests (HSE 2005)"The University has agreed and adopted the following Code of Practice for Manual Handling in accordance with the Manual Handling Operations Regulations and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. The University is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Code in the light of further developments and it will be reviewed at intervals by the Health and Safety Committee.

The Code should be referred to in conjunction with the University's Health and Safety Policy and individual Departmental Procedures.

The purpose of the Code is to

1.1. establish broad, general guidelines for the assessment and control of risks arising from the manual handling of loads and develop a simple strategy for manual handling as follows:-

1. Avoid hazardous manual handling operations where possible

2. Assess any hazardous operations that cannot be avoided

3. Remove or reduce the risk of injury using the assessment as a basis for action.

1.2. meet the requirements of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations

2. Implementation

Deans of Faculty and Heads of Support Departments are responsible for the implementation of the Code of Practice within their area of control.
Each Dean of Faculty and Head of Support Department must identify who will be responsible for undertaking risk assessments under the Code. These persons must be competent to carry out the assessments, recognising their own limitations and seeking specialist advice where necessary.

Deans and Heads, assisted by Departmental Health and Safety Co-ordinators, must satisfy themselves that risk assessments are

2.1. completed
2.2. consistent and to a reasonable standard
2.3. relate to the actual work being undertaken
2.4. recorded (where appropriate) and proper records maintained
2.5. reviewed.

Employees must co-operate with their Dean or Head in the making of assessments. They must make full and proper use of any system of work and/or prescribed safety equipment, reporting any defects and participate in any training. They must alert their Dean or Head to pregnancy or any known medical condition which might affect their ability to handle loads safely.

Information and training on manual handling will be provided wherever appropriate through Occupational Health & Safety Services and a guidance leaflet on manual handling which is freely available.

Employees presenting with a medical condition arising from manual handling operations, or who have concerns over their health in relation to manual handling, may self refer or be referred by the their line manager, Head or Human Resources Department to the Occupational Health Advisor for information, advice and support in accordance with the Occupational Health Strategy.

In appropriate circumstances, following assessment by the Occupational Health Advisor, individuals may be referred to the University Chiropractic Centre or physiotherapist for a course of treatment in accordance with the Chiropractic and Physiotherapy Rehabilitation Procedure.

3. **Avoidance of Manual Handling**

- First consider whether the risk of injury associated with the manual handling operation can be dismissed as trivial or insignificant, e.g. because of weight, size, shape, stability etc. of load to be handled, the environmental conditions (heat, cold, wet etc.), the position of the handler (standing, crouched, seated, etc.) and the capability of the individual handler(s).

- If there is a risk of injury from manual handling consider whether the operation is necessary and if it be eliminated altogether.

- If a load handling operation cannot be avoided, is it possible to introduce automation or mechanisation for the operation and thus avoid manual handling?

4. **Assessment of Risk**
If a formal assessment is carried out it will need to be recorded and retained. This assessment must take into account the task, the load, the working environment and the individual capability. An assessment checklist is included as Appendix 1.

In order to carry out the assessment, the following factors need to be considered:-

4.1 The Task

Does the task involve:-

- twisting the trunk;
- stooping;
- excessive lifting or lowering distance;
- holding the load at a distance from the trunk;
- an incorrect posture by the handler;
- involve carrying excessive distances;
- excessive pushing or pulling of the load;
- a risk of sudden movement of the load;
- frequent or prolonged physical effort;
- insufficient rest or recovery periods;
- handling while seated;
- team handling?

4.2 The Load

Is the load:-

- too heavy for individual's capacity;
- bulky or unwieldy;
- difficult to grasp, i.e. smooth, wet or slippery;
- unstable or are contents liable to shift;
- sharp, hot or potentially damaging?

4.3 The Working Environment

Are there:-

- space constraints preventing good posture;
- uneven, slippery or unstable floors;
- variations in the levels of floors or work surfaces;
- extremes of temperature, humidity, or air movement;
- poor lighting conditions?

4.4 Individual Capacity

Does the task:-

require unusual strength, height etc.;
put at risk those who are pregnant or those with health problems;
require special knowledge or training for its safe performance?

5. Reducing the Risk

The final stage, following the assessment, must indicate what steps are to be taken to reduce the risk of injury to those individuals undertaking the manual handling operation to the lowest reasonably practicable level. The approach to this may depend upon the nature and circumstances of the operation; but the provision of mechanical assistance and the job or workplace design must be considered. Following on from the approach taken in the assessment, consideration should be given to the following, either in total or in isolation:-

5.1 The Task

- improve the task layout, e.g. storage of loads at waist height;
- use the body more efficiently, i.e. reduce or eliminate the need for twisting, stooping or stretching;
- improve the work routine, e.g. minimise the need for fixed postures, reduce the frequency of handling loads;
- avoid lifting loads from the floor while seated where possible;
- introduce safe team handling where it would be difficult or unsafe for one person;
- use personal protective equipment such as gloves, overalls or safety shoes where appropriate;
- ensure any handling aids or personal protective equipment is maintained and is accessible.

5.2 The Load

- make it lighter by breaking down loads;
- make it smaller or easier to manage;
- make it easier to grasp by providing handles or handgrips;
- make it more stable by packaging objects so they will not shift;
- make it less damaging to hold, e.g. avoid sharp edges or corners and where this is not possible use suitable personal protective equipment; adequately insulate containers of hot or cold materials or where this is not possible use suitable personal protective equipment.

5.3 The Working Environment

- ensure there is adequate room to manoeuvre during manual handling operations;
- pay particular attention to the condition and nature of the floor surface; spillages should be cleared up promptly.
- where more than one level is involved, the transition should be made by a gentle slope or well positioned steps;
- avoid extremes of temperature and excessive humidity where possible;
- ensure there is adequate lighting.

5.4 Individual Capacity

- give particular consideration to those who are or recently have been pregnant or are known to have a history of back trouble, hernia or other injury.
- provide information and appropriate training on the manual handling operation.

6. Review of Assessment
The assessment should be kept up to date. It should be reviewed whenever it is considered that it is no longer valid, e.g. working conditions or personnel have changed, or there has been a significant change in the manual handling operation.

7. **Further Information**

Further information may be obtained from Occupational Health & Safety Services

September 2007
# UNIVERSITY OF GLAMORGAN
PRIFYSGOL MORGANNWG

MANUAL HANDLING OF LOADS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>Operations covered by this assessment: ..........................................................</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations:</td>
<td>..................................................................................................................</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel involved:</td>
<td>..................................................................................................................</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of assessment:</td>
<td>..................................................................................................................</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall priority for remedial action: Nil/Low/Med/High*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remedial action to be taken: ..................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date by which action is to be taken: ......................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date for reassessment: ........................................</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessor’s name: ..............................................</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean/Head Signature: ..........................................</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*circle as appropriate

## Section A - Preliminary

**Q1** Do the operations involve a significant risk of injury?
- Yes/No*
  - If ‘Yes’ go to Q2. If ‘No’ the assessment need go no further
  - If in doubt answer ‘Yes’

**Q2** Can the operations be avoided/mechanised/automated at reasonable cost?
- Yes/No*
  - If ‘No’ go to Section B. If ‘Yes’ you may go straight to Section C if you wish.

## Section B - Overleaf

## Section C - Overall assessment of risk:

**Q** What is your overall assessment of the risk of injury?
- Insignificant/Low/Med/High*
  - If not ‘Insignificant’ go to Section D
  - If ‘Insignificant’ the assessment need go no further

## Section D - Remedial action:

What remedial action should be taken, in order of priority?

i  ....................................................................................................................... ..........................

ii ................................................................................................................................................

iii ................................................................................................................................................

iv ................................................................................................................................................

v ................................................................................................................................................

And finally

- complete the SUMMARY above
- compare it with your other manual handling assessments
- decide your priorities for action
### Section B - More detailed assessment, where necessary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to consider:</th>
<th>Level of Risk (Tick as appropriate)</th>
<th>Possible remedial action (Make rough notes in this column in preparation for completing Section D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(If the answer to a question is 'Yes' place a tick against it and then consider the level of risk)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The tasks - do they involve:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>- holding loads away from trunk?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- twisting?</td>
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<td>- stooping?</td>
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<td>- reaching upwards?</td>
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<td>- large vertical movement?</td>
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<td>- long carrying distances?</td>
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<td>- strenuous pushing or pulling?</td>
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<td>- unpredictable movement of loads?</td>
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<td>- repetitive handling?</td>
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<td>- insufficient rest or recovery?</td>
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<td>- a workrate imposed by a process</td>
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<tr>
<td>The loads - are they</td>
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<tr>
<td>- heavy?</td>
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<td>- bulky/unwieldy?</td>
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<td>- difficult to grasp?</td>
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<td>- unstable/unpredictable?</td>
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<td>- intrinsically harmful (e.g. sharp/hot)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The working environment - are there:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- constraints on posture?</td>
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<td>- poor floors?</td>
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<td>- variations in levels?</td>
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<td>- hot/cold/humid conditions?</td>
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<td>- strong air movements?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- poor lighting conditions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual capability - does the job:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- require unusual capability?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- hazard those with a health problem?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- hazard those who are pregnant?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- call for special information/training?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other factors -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is movement or posture hindered by clothing or personal protective equipment?</td>
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</table>

Deciding the level of risk will inevitably call for judgement.

**when you have completed Section B go to Section C.**