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Hazardous Manual Tasks

Risk Assessment and Control Tool

The Hazardous Manual Tasks (HMTs) Risk Assessment and Control Tool helps you determine if there is a risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) from HMTs in your workplace. The tool guides you in identifying and assessing the risk, identifying the source of risk and developing and maintaining control measures.

Note: If you are not aware of hazardous manual tasks in your workplace, the Identification Tool could be used as an initial step to identify, keep records and prioritise hazardous manual tasks that requires a risk assessment.

This tool supports Appendix D of the Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2020

Date of assessment:	**Position(s):**
26-Feb-2025	Safety Officer
Name of assessor(s):	**Incident number (if applicable):**
Mark Williams	23

List Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and worker(s) to consult.

Chris Hughes, Paul Johnson, Zheng Yon (PC)

Hazard identification

1 Identify work that involves hazardous manual tasks

Name of work or activity:

Manual handling 29.4 kg x 3.6 m x 1.2 m x 10 mm (6.8 kg/m2) sheet plasterboard.

Location of work or activity:

Commercial construction of apartments

Describe the work or activity:

Two workers carry plasterboard sheets (~29.4Kg) from storage area to the work area, where three workers lift and fix them to the ceiling (this takes about 50 sec per sheet). Workers spend over 4 hours fixing the sheets throughout the day, including handling other heavier materials like fibre cement.

Review of available information:

- ☑ Records of injuries, incidents and investigations
- ☑ WHS or hazard inspection reports
- ☑ Compensation claims
- ☑ WHS Committee meeting minutes
- ☐ Surveys (i.e., Discomfort Survey)
- ☐ Other

Describe the available information reviewed (if any):

Worker injured their shoulder from the plasterboard sheets handling. Have seen physio and submitted a compensation claim. Task was raised at the WHS committee meeting as hazardous and possible changes were discussed.

Assessing the risks

2 Is there a risk of MSD?

Ask workers questions to better understand the sources of MSD risks and to help you choose the most effective risk controls.

REPETITIVE MOVEMENT

Repetition means making the same type of movements over and over. Note whether the tasks performed before and after the assessed task place similar demands on the muscles and joints, or whether the postures are different.

1 ○	2 ✓	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○
Movement less than every 5 minutes	Movement once every 1-5 minutes	Movement once every 30 seconds – 1 minute	Movement once every 10–30 seconds	Movement once every 10 seconds or less

AWKWARD POSTURE

Consider each joint in the body and how far it is from a neutral comfortable position. It is the joints that are in extreme positions that need particular focus.

1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ✓
All postures neutral	Moderate deviations from neutral in one direction only	Moderate deviations in more than one direction	Near end range of motion posture in one direction	Near end range of motion in more than one direction

SUSTAINED POSTURE

Consider to what degree a non-neutral posture is held static/fixed without the ability to change position. Note: Sitting and standing postures should not be rated on this scale.

1 ○	2 ○	3 ✓	4 ○	5 ○
Non-neutral posture held for < 10 seconds	Non-neutral posture held for 10-30 seconds	Non-neutral posture held for 30 seconds – 1 minute	Non-neutral posture held for < 1 minute to 2 minutes	Non-neutral posture held for > 2 minutes

FORCE EXERTION

Consider the amount of force and speed required to do the task. Force is relative to the body part. Look for signs of workers bracing their bodies, facial grimaces or altered breathing as signs of over-exertion.

1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ✓	5 ○
☐ Minimal force ☐ Slow movements	☐ Low force ☐ Low speed	☐ Moderate force ☑ Moderate speed	☑ High force ☐ High speed	☐ Maximal force ☐ Fast, jerky movement

VIBRATION

Consider how extreme the vibration is. Whole body vibration contributes to increased injury, particularly in the back, neck and legs. Hand/arm vibration is primarily a risk factor for the arms, hands and shoulders.

1 ✓	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○
None		Moderate amplitude		Extreme amplitude

DURATION OF CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE OF TASK

Duration is the exposure to the task without a break. Greater than 30 minutes exposure to risk factors, such as awkward postures or vibration without a break, is considered to have increased risk.

1 ○	2 ○	3 ✓	4 ○	5 ○
<10 minutes	10 - 30 minutes	>30 minutes - 1 hour	>1 - 2 hours	2+ hours

TOTAL TIME TASK PERFORMED IN A DAY

1 ○	2 ○	3 ✓	4 ○	5 ○
<2 hours	>2-4 hours	>4-6 hours	>6-8 hours	8+ hours

In general, the higher the risk rating or the greater the number of risks present, will result in a greater risk of MSD.
If one or more risk factors are in the moderate or high ranges, then the task is a risk of MSD and must be controlled.

Identify the sources of MSD risk

Work area design and layout

Examples include: available work space, workstation design and furniture & equipment

Provide a description of the layout:

• There were a number of small, tight work areas that make it difficult to use mechanical aid.
• Housekeeping was poor, with access ways cluttered with tools and scraps of material.
• The ceiling height was 2700mm (9 ft). If sheets are to be manually handled, it requires work to be done with arms overhead.
• There was no designated storage area for mechanical aids and bulky materials.

Nature, size, weight or number of persons, animals or things handled

Examples include: loads handled, the tools and equipment being used (e.g., not fit-for-purpose) and mechanical aids.

Provide a description of the things handled:

• The plasterboard sheets are large and awkward and difficult to grasp and manually handle.
• The sheets are handled frequently during the day.

Systems of Work

A system of work is the way that work is done. Consider how a system of work can influence the: pace and flow of work, time constraints, workload resources and guidance, available control over work, variation of work, support by management, supervisors and colleagues, staffing levels, skill mix and shift arrangements and workplace training. *Consider using a psychosocial hazard risk assessment tool to assess these risks.*

Provide a description of the systems of work:

• Workers has tight time frame to finish the job.
• There is minimal multi-skilling—the wall and ceiling fixers are handling the sheets frequently throughout the day. There are teams of framers, hangers and setters, all of whom are exposed to hazardous manual tasks specific to the work that they do.
• Manual tasks training only in lifting techniques.

Workplace environment

Examples may include: cold environment, high temperatures, humid environment, wind, slippery and uneven floor surfaces, obstructions and lighting.

Provide a description of the workplace environment:

• Poor lighting
• Obstructions
• General site congestion of material and trades.

Risk control measures

3 Control risks

An employer must, so far as is reasonably practicable, eliminate any risk of MSDs associated with HMTs.
If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, the employer must reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

Can the MSD risk from work involving hazardous manual tasks be eliminated? ☐ Yes ☑ No

If the answer is no:

Can the MSD risk from work involving hazardous manual tasks be reduced?

Can you change the workplace layout?	☑ Yes	☐ No
Can you make changes to the system of work?	☑ Yes	☐ No
Can you change the loads, tools or equipment handled?	☑ Yes	☐ No
Can you change the workplace environment?	☑ Yes	☐ No

Provide a description of the changes:

• Provide electronic pallet jack (EPJ) and sheet trolley to move sheets from storage area to the work area.
• Design work area for loads to be stored and handled as close to where the work is being done.
• Provide a powered sheet lifter for fixing sheets to walls and ceilings where practicable.
• Review workflow to ensure that there is no site congestion of materials or trades.
• Ensure access ways are clear and lighting is adequate
• Ensure trade/task multi-skilling to allow for task rotation

Training

Can training be provided to support the above control measures? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Training to support the risk controls needs to be work specific. Providing 'how to lift' training, like basic instructions to bend your knees and keep your back straight is not effective in reducing injury risks and should not be used as the sole or primary means of controlling the MSD risk. HMT training should include the following:

- How to do the work safely? (i.e., using mechanical aids, tools, equipment, safe work procedures)
- How to report problems or maintenance issues? (i.e., reporting an injury and/or reporting a faulty mechanical aid)
- How to identify HMTs?
- How to assess MSD risk from HMTs?
- How control measures are being used in the workplace to minimize the risk of injury?

Provide a description of the training/information

• Workers have specific training for the handling of plasterboard sheets including:
o manual task risk management, including the characteristics of hazardous manual tasks
o specific manual task risks and the measures in place to control them
o how to perform manual tasks safely, including the use of mechanical aids, tools, equipment and work procedures
o how to report a problem or maintenance issues

Training must be reviewed regularly.

4 Implementing risk control measures

When will these controls be implemented?

Purchase order for sheet trolley and powered sheet lifter.
Clear access ways

Mark Williams

05-Mar-2025 | 05-Apr-2025

Purchase order powered sheet lifter.
Review where loads to be stored and handled as close to where the work is being done.
Suitable and adequate manual handling training covering the use of new equipment

Mark Williams

30-Apr-2025 | 30-Apr-2025

Building a program for trade/task cross training for framers, hangers and setters and increase job rotation.

Jess Campbell

30-Jun-2025 | 30-Jul-2025

Review and revision of risk control measures

5 Review and revise the controls

30-Apr-2025 | Mark Williams

Consultation has been undertaken with relevant workers and HSR ☐ Yes ☐ No

The assessor should consider:

Have the controls implemented reduced the risks? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have any new risks been created by the controls? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Can further controls be implemented to reduce the risk further? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Can you change the workplace environment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Observations and further controls

This tool has been adapted from hazardous manual handling risk assessment and control tool - WorkSafe Victoria.
For more information, please visit www.safework.sa.gov.au
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Government of South Australia
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