



To: All Operational Colleagues and Service Partners
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Manual Handling

Recently, three of our colleagues have suffered injuries from manual handling. These injuries resulted from lifting link box lids, pushing an LV mat into a vehicle to be transported, and trying to lift an item of overhead line steelwork. The operatives suffered injuries to their backs, some of which have resulted in prescribed medication and time off work. Thankfully our colleagues will make full recoveries, but this may not have been the case, so we need to be familiar and conscious of the safest way to handle loads.

Based on these recent events it's a good time to remind ourselves of manual handling techniques and best practice to try and help prevent further injuries. It's also important to remember the need to assess the risk, as in some cases it's not safe to try and lift or handle items alone or without the help of mechanical aids. Other hazards can often take priority in our mind, but once learnt, these tips can become subconscious practice, so you can lift, lower, push and pull loads safely.

Assess the task and the risk

The first thing we can consider is the task and the risk and how it is performed safely. This is where we need to consider things like if we can use a lifting aid, do we need help from someone else, and can we reduce the distance of travel or avoiding repetitive movements. We need to allocate time for rest for our muscles and plan the working day accordingly to avoid excess fatigue.



A good example of using lifting aids is for link box lids. There are multiple lifters available, and depending on the type of link box, each lifter will have its place. Please speak to your line manager about the types of lifters available from TW Engineering.

The Load

Some things you can't lift – so don't try.

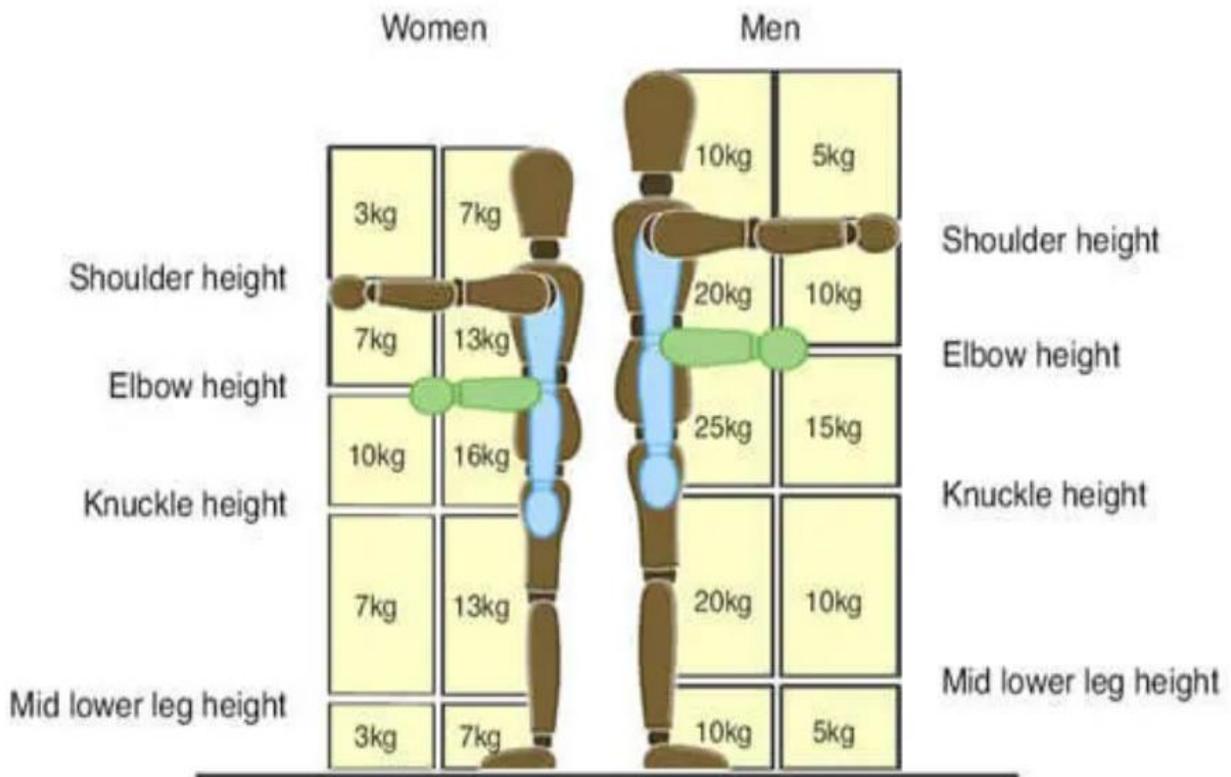
Now we can look at what we are moving. Can we make it lighter, either by doing multiple trips or asking somebody to help us? Is the weight evenly distributed and easy to grasp? This can make loads difficult to hold and lead to adopting uncomfortable positions. Weight distribution can be affected by stacking loads so avoid this where possible.

The Working Environment

The next thing to consider is where we are performing the task. You should consider the best route to take - which may not be the shortest. Ideally you will want a non-obstructed or slippery route with suitable lighting. You may need to add artificial lighting such as torches or clear a path before moving. Avoid steps and ramps where possible. The weather may also affect the conditions of the floor such as ice, and heat may mean you need to schedule more frequent breaks.

Individual Capabilities

Finally, we need to think about the people doing the task. Are they trained and fit to perform the task? Do they have any previous injuries or health conditions which need to be considered? It is also useful to consider the number of people needed. Don't be afraid to ask for help or to offer help to somebody who is carrying out manual handling activities. There are guidelines for the weight people can lift safely, but manual handling ability will differ for different people; for example, some might have health conditions to consider before trying to lift and handle an object.



If you need any further guidance on manual handling operations or can think of ways of reducing the risk when undertaking manual handling activities, please speak to your line manager so this can be fed back to the Health, Safety and Training team.