1. General Information

Preventing accidents or injury resulting from the performance of manual tasks in the workplace must be considered as part of the Department of Health (DoH) Workplace Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS). While the Department is responsible for providing a safe work environment for staff to work in, managers and staff are responsible for taking reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others in the workplace. See WH&S Overview for more information.

The Guidelines - Performing Safe Manual Tasks guide the management of risks associated with performing manual tasks and aims to minimise the number and severity of manual handling related injuries or accidents.

The DoH Workplace Health & Safety and WH&S Manual Handling intranet sites provide a range of workplace health and safety resources. Related Atlas items are listed in Section 6.


**Hazard:** means any thing (including an intrinsic property of a thing), or situation, with the potential to cause or contribute to the development of musculoskeletal disorders to workers performing manual tasks. It may include the type of work performed, the way the work is performed, including use or handling of items, or a combination of these factors.

**Hazardous Manual Task:** means a manual task:

- having any of the following characteristics:
  - i. repetitive or sustained application of force;
  - ii. repetitive or sustained awkward posture;
  - iii. repetitive or sustained movement;
  - iv. application of high force;
  - v. exposure to sustained vibration;

- involving the handling of a person or an animal;

- involving the handling of unstable or unbalanced loads or loads which are difficult to grasp or hold.

**Manual Task:** means a task comprised wholly or partly by any activity requiring a person to use his or her musculoskeletal system in performing his or her work and can include the use of force for lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying or otherwise moving, holding or restraining any person, animal or item.

**Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD):** means an injury or disease of the musculoskeletal system that arises in whole or in part from undertaking manual tasks in the workplace, whether occurring suddenly or over a prolonged period of time, but does not include an injury or disease which is caused by crushing, entrapment or cutting resulting from the mechanical operation of plant or other equipment.

**Risk:** means the likelihood of a manual task causing musculoskeletal disorders to workers and the likely severity of those musculoskeletal disorders should they occur.
3. Responsibilities

3.1 Primary Health Care (PHC) Staff

- Abide by legislative and regulatory requirements
- Abide by responsibilities of managers / employees as described in Performing Safe Manual Task Guideline
- Use safe manual handling techniques
- Utilise manual handling aids where available and appropriate for moving goods, eg cartons from stores, furniture or other equipment
- Complete training and competency in using equipment as appropriate, for example using the Stryker® Stretcher
- Complete an incident report via RiskMan whenever applicable

3.2 Primary Health Care Manager (PHCM)

As for PHC Staff, plus:
- Ensure that health centre staff adhere to Safe Manual Handling Guidelines
- Support staff to undertake relevant manual handling training
- Support availability and use of manual handling aids for moving goods
- Foster an environment to encourage timely reporting of any manual handling incidents

3.3 District Manager / Manager

As for PHC Staff, plus
- Ensure relevant manual handling training is undertaken
- Ensure that reporting timelines are followed and follow-up of incidents occurs
- Ensure reporting to relevant authorities in accordance with legislative requirements. This will be prompted by the RiskMan system

3.4 Primary Health Care Executive and Management (CAHS / TEHS)

- Abide by legislative and regulatory requirements
- Provide all employees with the environment, equipment and training to perform their duties within a reasonable level of safety

3.5 Corporate Services Bureau - Organisational Health & Safety Unit

- Monitor all PHC WH&S RiskMan incident reports
- Utilise incident reports to identify potential training deficits for PHC

4 Procedure

4.1 Manual Handling Training & Resources

Managers must ensure that all new staff undergo mandatory WH&S training and attend manual handling education relevant to their work area. Workplace induction should include an introduction to the location and to the appropriate use of manual handling equipment provided in the work area.

Staff must participate in manual handling and education / training provided and use safe manual handling techniques. Any equipment provided for manual handling must be used in the correct manner.

Details of training courses are available on the WHS Mandatory Training intranet site and via Workplace Health & Safety Packages on MyLearning.

Manual handling resources must be readily available in all health centres. A range of resources is available on line via the Workplace Health & Safety and WH&S Manual Handling intranet sites, including a suite of discs aimed at preventing the occurrence of injury, and/or reducing the severity of injuries that may result from performing all types of manual tasks in the workplace.
Staff in health centres with slow internet connections may wish to contact the WH&S Unit if they would like access to the injury prevention discs.

Other readily available resources include the Workplace Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS), Managers Hands On Guide to Safety, and WorkSafe Manual Handling Bulletins.

4.2 Manual Handling Risk Management

All managers and staff must be active in systematic and ongoing risk identification, assessment, control and reporting in relation to relevant manual handling tasks and equipment. Element 6 Managers Hands On Guide to Safety provides practical information on Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control. The Atlas document Hazard Identification provides further information.

4.2.1 Manual Handling Risk Assessment and Identification

DoH stipulates a consistent systematic approach to identifying and assessing all workplace risks, including manual handling tasks. The Checklist: Performing Safe Manual Tasks, which includes a remedial action plan, can assist with identifying and rectifying gaps in employees’ knowledge and ability to demonstrate required core skills for workplace manual handling tasks. The checklist is based on the elements of the Managers Hands On Guide to Safety.

4.2.2 Risk Evaluation & Control Measures

Risk control is the action taken to eliminate or minimise the risks that may arise as a result of the activities of DoH employees. Once a risk is identified, it must be evaluated. Action must be taken depending on the likelihood or potential consequences of an accident or injury occurring as a result of this risk, and how often staff are likely to be exposed to the risk.

Examples of risk control measures include reviewing how a procedure is conducted, acquiring or repairing lifting equipment suited to a particular task or recommending further manual handling training and reinforcing the legal requirement to adhere to correct procedures.


4.2.3 Recording and Reporting Manual Handling Incidents

All manual handling incidents or injuries must be reported on RiskMan as per Incident Reporting. The DoH WH&S Unit is automatically notified via RiskMan when a ‘worker’ WH&S incident report is lodged.

In some cases it may be necessary for staff to complete the NT WorkSafe Rehabilitation & Compensation Form and/or follow Critical Incident Follow-up processes. See Workers Rehabilitation & Compensation for further information.

4.2.4 Monitoring & Review of Manual Handling Risk Control Measures

Risk assessment is an ongoing process. Control measures that have been put into place must be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure firstly, that they have been implemented and secondly, that they do minimise the risk of further injury.

4.3 Patient (Client) Handling

The risk management approach must be applied every time a client has to be lifted manually. Manual lifting of a client must be eliminated in all but exceptional or life threatening situations, and should only continue if it does not involve lifting all or most of a client’s weight.

In non-emergency situations staff should only attempt to transfer clients if personal risk has been minimised. There are certain client moves which have been banned due to the
unacceptable level of risk involved and replaced with safer techniques using equipment such as slide sheets or pat slides. The WH&S Injury Prevention website provides resources on Interactive Strategies and Techniques for High Risk Manual Handling Tasks which demonstrate some common techniques for safe movement of clients (see WH&S Manual Handling webpage and scroll down to disc 5).

PHC recognises that health centres do not have mechanical hoists and that only minimal staff may be available in remote health centres. After a risk assessment has deemed it safe to manually move the client, one person must be designated as team leader and all involved staff must be aware of their role and take instruction from the team leader only.

4.4 Handling of Other Goods

PHC recognises that in the absence of professional removalists or delivery services, staff in remote health centres often have no option but to move, lift and/or transport goods such as cartons from stores, furniture or other equipment.

In all situations staff must apply the risk management process and apply the principles of body mechanics when performing manual tasks. Equipment / manual handling aids provided for performing manual tasks must be used where available and in an appropriate manner. If necessary, health centre staff who are required to move large, unstable or heavy goods are advised to seek assistance from Community Council or other community organisation which has access to larger lifting equipment such as a forklift.

Resources on the WH&S Manual Handling provide guidance for performing tasks at work.

4.5 Manual Handling Equipment

Equipment used for manual handling must be well maintained. The wheels of beds, trolleys, stretchers, hand trucks / carton trolleys and equipment such as IV poles on stands must move freely and the tyres of wheelchairs must be adequately inflated. Pat slides and slide sheets must in good condition and readily available when required.

It is important to note that it is PHC policy that only persons with completed Stryker® Stretcher competency take responsibility for using the controls and coordination use of the stretcher. The trained user is able to direct and guide non-trained staff / people assisting with the use of the stretcher. The untrained person must not operate the controls on the stretcher.

The Checklist – Performing Safe Manual Tasks (with remedial action plan) can assist in identifying and planning required equipment for clinical environments.

4.6 Workforce Division WH&S Contacts

Please see WH&S contacts webpage for details.

5. Forms

Checklist – Performing Safe Manual Tasks (with remedial action plan)
RiskMan down time form (ONLY to be used in the event of outages)

6. References and Supporting Documents

Related Atlas Items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident Follow-up</th>
<th>Stryker® Stretcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hazard Identification</td>
<td>WH&amp;S Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident Reporting</td>
<td>Workers' Rehabilitation &amp; Compensation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act
Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations
Workplace Health & Safety (intranet)
  Workplace Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS)
  Manual Handling
  Guidelines - Performing Safe Manual Tasks
  WHS contacts
National Standard for Manual Tasks Safe Work Australia
RiskMan (intranet)
Training & Development (intranet)
  WHS Mandatory Training
MyLearning (intranet)
  Workplace Health & Safety Packages