

# Risk Assessment

Advice & checklist for safety reps on employers' manual handling risk assessments

# Risk Assessment

Your employer's responsibilities to eliminate/reduce risk of MSDs

## INTRODUCTION

A manual handling hazard is an activity or system of work that could cause harm. A risk reflects the likelihood that harm will occur, together with how severe that harm may be. In order to reduce the risks associated with manual handling, a specific risk assessment as stipulated in the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 & Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 is required.

When the CSP undertook its study of members' work related MSDs in 2005 our findings showed that around a considerable 44% of our members had not had a risk assessment in their current post. Out of those members that did get risk assessed 21% felt that the assessment was insufficient to their needs. This indicates that potentially a large portion of our members was not risk assessed which not only goes against health and safety regulations but also national guidance and standards set for the NHS as a whole.

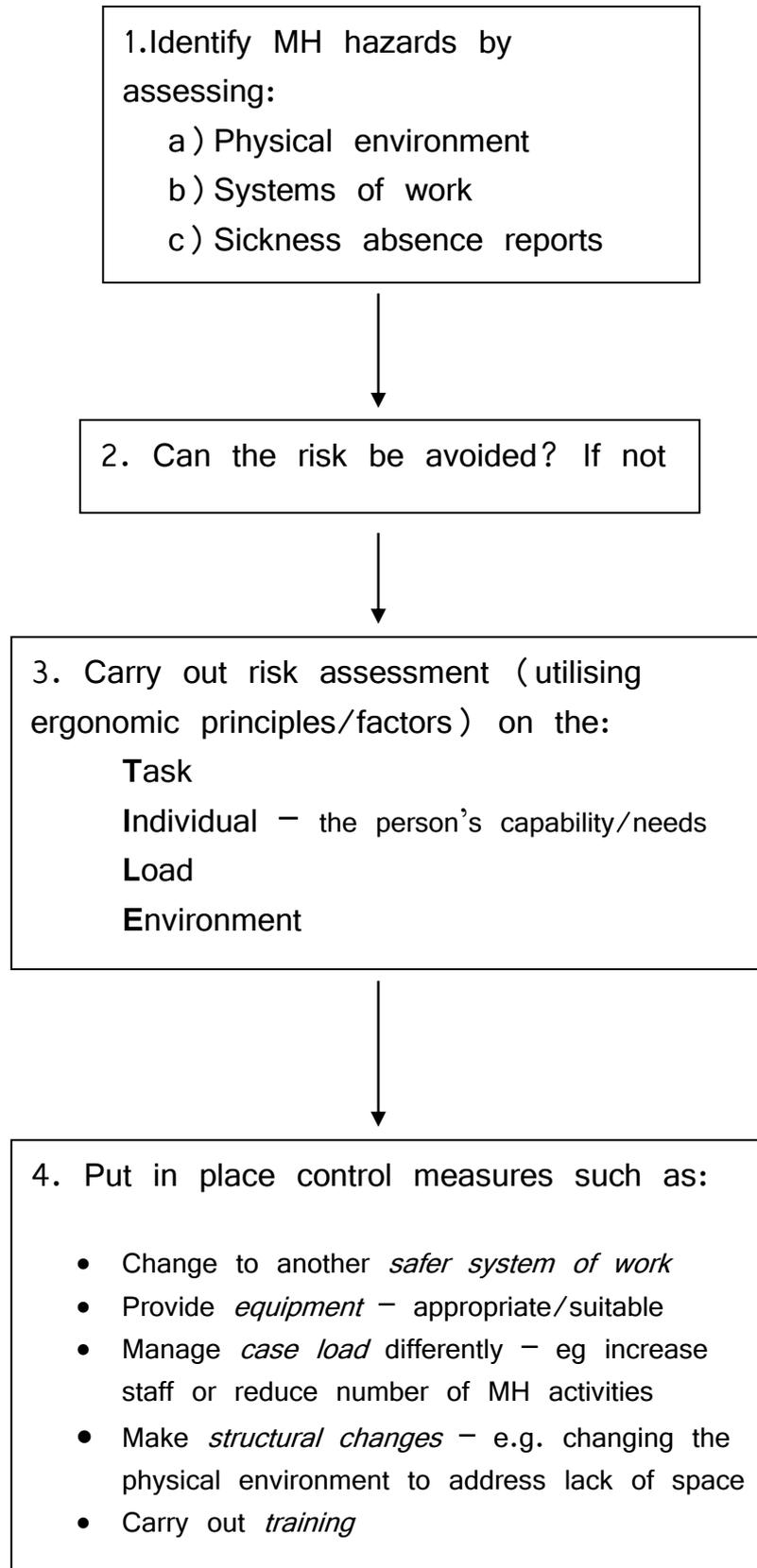
For instance, the NHS Workplace Health & Safety Standards, produced by the NHS Staff Council, state under the standard on musculoskeletal disorders/manual handling that policies and procedures should include:

1. A training needs analysis of staff is carried out and includes a schedule for when training is undertaken
2. Refresher training is provided to all staff
3. Equipment needs analysis is undertaken & maintenance programmes are also in place.
4. Generic risk assessments are undertaken, including regular reviews on environment/patients/inanimate objects

## ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics, (the study of people and their working environment so that equipment or work systems can be designed to suit a person's ability) should be the basis for a manual handling risk assessment. The emphasis is on fitting the task or activity to the person, not the person to the task. The key factors the employer should cover include the actual tasks and load, the individual worker's circumstances/needs and the working environment.

Does your employer's process for risk assessment follow these steps?



## SAFETY REP'S CONSULTATION RIGHTS

Employers should consult safety reps about their risk assessments as recognised under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which states-

*The risk assessment process needs to be practical and take account of the views of the employees and their safety representatives who will have practical knowledge to contribute (Approved Code of Conduct – paragraph 15).*

Similar clauses can also be found in the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 92; under guidance paragraph 41 the Regulations state

*“Encourage employees, their safety representatives and safety committees to play a positive part in the assessment process”*

The NHS Workplace Health and Safety Standards provides some useful criteria under Section A Management of Health & Safety – Role & Rights of Safety Reps-

*Safety reps are consulted at all stages of risk assessment planning and implementation,*

The Management of health and safety at work regulations 1999 sets out in regulations 3 and 7 safety reps' could be consulted on matters such as:

- *Training of risk assessors*
- *Planning of risk assessments priorities & programmes*
- *Receiving copies of written records*
- *The arrangement for monitoring and review of assessments.*

For manual handling risk assessments, we believe you should be given copies of all generic risk assessments and asked to comment on them. With respect to new graduates and students on clinical placements ensure your employer has a system in place that quickly and methodically risk assesses them as soon as they come on board or for existing staff who are about to start a new role.

One of the most crucial jobs of a health and safety rep is checking and challenging their employer's risk assessments and ensuring appropriate control measures are in place.

## CHECKLIST FOR SAFETY REPS ON EMPLOYER'S MANUAL HANDLING RISK ASSESSMENTS

1. Has your employer carried out risk assessments? If not, are arrangements in place to get them underway? Ask for a copy of your employer's risk assessment policy
2. Who carries out risk assessments?
  - Are they 'competent' i.e. relevant knowledge – i.e. ergonomics and understanding of the work involved and the H&S regulations etc that apply.
  - What information, training have they been provided with?
  - Do they have the necessary time, resources & authority to do the job?
3. Are all manual handling operations identified for each job and for each employee/worker – including community/lone working situations?
  - Employers have a general duty to consider factors which might put staff at risk of injury such as their age, strength, state of health either of a permanent (physically disabled) or temporary nature (hernia or post-operative recovery). In such situations MH work should be modified to suit their abilities.
4. Are existing preventative measures undertaken properly?
5. Are the control measures (e.g equipment /case load guidelines/policies etc) followed?
  - Do the control measures work?
  - Are they monitored?
6. Is information, instruction and training provisions adequate?
7. As the safety rep have you been given copies of, or access to, the written records of the risk assessments? If so, do they explain the hazards
  - Do they accurately grade the level of risk?
  - Do they clearly outline the proposed control measures?
  - Do they identify who is at risk?
  - Do they contain sufficient information for you to judge whether they are adequate?
8. Are control measures being implemented?
  - Has a plan of action been drawn up for implementing the control measures identified in the risk assessment?
  - Are priorities in the plan identified?
  - Is there a timeframe for action points?
  - Does the plan identify who is responsible for taking action?
  - Is money available to implement the measures?  
*If cost is an issue, point out that manual handling injuries cost employers money in lost working time, payments for sick leave and job cover, loss of trained and experienced staff and successful compensation claims.*
9. Are risk assessments kept up to date?
10. Do planned reviews of risk assessments take place at regular intervals?
11. Before changes get made are risk assessments reviewed, for example introduction of new equipment or new ways of working in the workplace?
12. Do risk assessments get reviewed when there is evidence control measures are inadequate, for example following accidents, near misses, reports of ill health, or findings from safety reps' inspections?
13. When there is new legislation or new medical evidence introduced, is the risk assessment reviewed for compliance?

## OTHER USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Visit the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website [www.hse.gov.uk/risk](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk), which contains a link to their publication “Five steps to Risk Assessment”.

TUC publication “Risk Assessment: A Guide for Safety Representatives” available to download from the CSP national safety reps interactive network under the documents section – the document is titled *TUC Risk Assessment A Guide for Safety Reps*

CSP publication – *Guidance on Manual Handling in Physiotherapy, 4<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2014*. This document is available as a pdf download for members on the CSP website [www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk)

The NHS Staff Council publication “Workplace Health & Safety Standards”, in particular Sections A *The Management of Health & Safety* & Section E *Musculoskeletal disorders/manual handling*

The document is available as a free pdf download from the NHS Employers’ website [www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)

NHS Staff Council – *Back in Work* back pack, A resource for line managers and safety reps that includes a workplace and individual assessment tool. Available from the NHS Employers website [www.nhsemployers.org/](http://www.nhsemployers.org/)