

PERforM – IDENTIFYING HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

SURVEY

A worker discomfort survey can help identify hazardous manual tasks (HMT). Early reporting of symptoms can lead to risk controls being put in place before injury occurs.

It is important to ask your workers the type of tasks that are physically demanding, tiring, awkward and/or uncomfortable to perform. Remember, suitable and effective consultation with your workers is critical.

An example of some questions to ask are:

1. What jobs leave you feeling sore?
2. What jobs are you most afraid of getting hurt from?
3. What manual handling tasks stop you wanting to come to work?

Important point – When asking about ‘what jobs’, ensure you obtain specific details of the task such as:

- the exact description
- location
- duration.

For example, an answer of ‘shovelling’ does not provide sufficient details. A more useful answer would be ‘shovelling road base for around 1 hour when preparing for a concrete pour.’

As well as using a worker survey:

- **Observe manual tasks** – observe work processes and talk to workers. Look for HMT risk factors for example force, posture, movement and vibration.
- **Review available information** – such as hazard reports, inspection records and worker compensation claims
- **Look for trends** - investigate all new incidents and look for trends in past records. It is also worth noting that increased error or decreased productivity may be indicators that something is wrong.
- **When making a change** – consider the effects on workers when buying new tools or equipment, starting or changing work processes or work schedules.

This information has been sourced from the Participative Ergonomics for Manual Tasks (PERforM) Handbook Worksafe QLD. For more information please visit www.safework.nsw.gov.au

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