



MANAGING HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS CHECKLIST GUIDE 2018 – SUPERMARKETS AND GROCERY STORES

More than one third of the workers compensation claims in NSW are musculoskeletal disorders and the majority of these are caused by performing hazardous manual tasks. Over 6000 of these claims are within the supermarket and grocery store industry and caused by tasks such as handling of loads and pushing/pulling of trolleys.

HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

Manual tasks cover a wide range of activities that involve using the body to move or hold an object, people or animals. Examples of manual tasks include: stacking shelves, scanning items at checkouts and standing for a prolonged period of time. Not all manual tasks are hazardous. It is therefore necessary to identify those tasks that are hazardous and ensure they are adequately managed.

WHAT IS A HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASK?

A hazardous manual task requires a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing involving one or more of the following:

- repetitive or sustained force
- high or sudden force
- repetitive movement
- sustained or awkward posture
- exposure to vibration.

WHAT ARE MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS?

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) include injuries such as sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints.

MSDs most commonly occur from gradual wear and tear to these parts of the body while performing hazardous manual tasks. Parts of the body that are commonly affected in the supermarket and grocery store industry include the back, shoulder, wrist, knee and hand.

HOW DO I MANAGE THE RISKS FROM HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS?

As a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU, or employer) you must manage risks to health and safety relating to MSDs that are associated with hazardous manual tasks (Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017).

To manage risk, a PCBU must:

- identify hazards that could give rise to the risk
- eliminate the risk so far as is reasonably practicable
- if not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, minimise the risk by implementing control measures (actions and/or activities that are taken to prevent, eliminate or reduce the potential of exposure to a hazard) in accordance with the Hierarchy of Control
- maintain the control measures so that it remains effective
- review risk control measures.

An overview of the risk management process for manual tasks is provided in Appendix A of the Code of Practice – Hazardous Manual Tasks.

TALKING TO YOUR WORKERS

As a PCBU, you are required by law to consult with your workers who may be affected, or likely to be affected by any hazardous manual task. It is also a great way to improve and maintain health and safety in your workplace.

You must consult with your workers when:

- identifying hazards and assessing risks
- deciding on control measures to eliminate or minimise risks
- developing and reviewing of policies and procedures
- proposing changes that may affect the health and safety of your workers.

COMMON RISK FACTORS OF HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

The most common risk factors that you may come across in hazardous manual tasks performed by supermarket and grocery store workers include:

- handling of heavy, bulky or awkward loads
- twisting of the back, neck or upper body
- reaching and load handling at low levels and/or above shoulder height
- repetitive movements
- inadequate task variety or breaks
- working under time pressures
- movement constraints due to working in environments with limited space.

SOURCE OF THE RISKS

The risks of hazardous manual tasks in supermarket and grocery stores come from a range of sources including:

- design and layout of work areas – for example storage of heavy items on high or low shelves
- the nature of the item, equipment or tools – for example trolleys that are not appropriate for the task or are poorly maintained making them difficult to push/pull
- the nature of the load (including heavy boxes, bulky or awkward stock)
- the working environment – for example cool temperatures in freezers or cool rooms
- systems of work, work organisation and work practices – for example repetitive tasks, inadequate breaks or task variety, unreasonable timeframes/workload.

CONTROLLING THE RISKS – HIERARCHY OF CONTROL

ELIMINATE THE HAZARD	
Controls	Using automated equipment to move stock rather than manually moving stock. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• conveyors at checkouts• forklifts to move pallets.
RE-DESIGN, MODIFY OR SUBSTITUTE	
Tasks can be redesigned, modified, altered or substituted to minimise the risk of hazardous manual tasks. Risks associated with hazardous manual tasks can be reduced by modifying the: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. work area and layout2. load3. items, equipment and tools4. working environment5. systems of work, work organisation and work practices.	
Work area and layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redesign of workplace layout and systems to eliminate double handling (eg using double sided upright dairy fridges where newer stock is loaded from the rear, eliminating the need to remove older goods prior to stocking for stock rotation).• Redesign layout of storage areas both at the front and rear of the stores, so that stock placement is appropriate, taking into consideration item weight, size, turnover etc.• Improve access to loaded pallets. Use pallet stands or pallet lifters to raise the heights of pallets when handling stock.• Ensure adequate space to access shelving systems, cool rooms and equipment to minimise twisting or work in constrained postures.• Ensure the equipment is stored close to where it is needed to encourage use.
The load	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where goods are provided by suppliers in large, awkward or heavy containers/bags, negotiate with suppliers for goods to be provided in smaller sizes/weights or more appropriate containers (eg replacing sacks with boxes/containers with built in handles).• Break goods down into smaller loads prior to movement.• Instigate height and weight restrictions on trolleys (especially cage trolleys) to allow clear vision and to minimise strenuous pushing/pulling.
Items, equipment and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that appropriate equipment is available for use in manual tasks (eg steps, platform ladders and trolleys (electric/manual pallet jacks)).• Provide height appropriate work benches to accommodate staff variability.• Provide left and right handed checkout stations to reduce repetitive loading on one side of the body.
Working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve lighting, reduce noise and other distractions, and ensure adequate ventilation.• Provide adequate space for handling objects (avoid over-ordering of stock, which impacts on the ability to store and handle stock and leads to overcrowding of shelves and floor space).• Ensure floor surfaces are maintained in good, smooth and clean condition to prevent slips, trips and falls and to enable easy use of equipment (eg trolleys).

CONTROLLING THE RISKS – HIERARCHY OF CONTROL

Systems of work, organisations and practices

- Provide adequate rest breaks, task variety and rotation between tasks or work areas (eg rotate between right and left hand checkouts, bulk checkouts and express lanes) to allow workers to use different actions and postures.
- If possible, space deliveries over the course of the week to minimise peaks of incoming goods on any one day or time of day.
- Ensure appropriate staffing levels at peak time periods (eg Christmas, sales, stocktake times, etc.)
- Ensure all equipment is regularly inspected, serviced and maintained for continued ease of use.
- Involve staff selection of new equipment and where possible trial equipment prior to purchase.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

Administrative controls

- Provision of training, information and supervision.
- Developing and enforcing policies and procedures.
- Providing personal protective equipment.



MANAGING HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS CHECKLIST – SUPERMARKET AND GROCERY STORES

The checklist is designed to be completed by the PCBU representative (store manager) and worker representatives (cashier/customer service and grocery/stock hand/night fill) together.

This checklist is not designed to be an audit tool; rather a checklist to identify areas of improvement in the current system of work at store level. If you identify any issues or concerns during this process, please ensure a risk management approach is followed such as: identify the hazards associated with the task, assess the risk, control the risk and review if the control is effective.

Acknowledgment: This document contains information from the publication, 'OSH in Supermarkets and Grocery Stores', by Government of Western Australia, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation & Safety, available at www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/

Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

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