

Number 15-05

Safety Alert – Manual Handling Injuries

1 BACKGROUND

There have been 25 reports received in the first half of 2015 that related to Manual Handling risk.

17 of these reports involved people straining backs and limbs due to incorrect technique, trying to lift heavy items, or overworking without adequate breaks. All resulted in someone requiring at least first aid.

7 of these reports involved more serious medical treatment and 2 resulted in people having to take time off to recover.

Manual handling is any task requiring a person to use force to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or object. It is a legal requirement to undertake a risk assessment before undertaking manual handling tasks.

2 POTENTIAL OUTCOMES OF POOR MANUAL HANDLING PRACTICE

- ✦ Pain from strained muscles and / or ligaments
- ✦ Inability to perform certain tasks
- ✦ Difficulty in maintaining a good work / life balance
- ✦ Interference with extra-curricular activities such as sport, family life or hobbies
- ✦ Prolonged recovery times
- ✦ Severe cases can result in the need for surgery

3 PREVENTION

- ✦ Always assess the task before you start lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, stretching e.g. the weight and shape of the object, the distance to be moved, potential obstacles in the path of movement, availability of equipment to assist with the move, whether help is needed
- ✦ If you are lifting from the floor, stand astride the load, bend your knees, and keep your back straight
- ✦ If the load is too heavy, contact IFS to have a professional removalist undertake the task with the proper tools
- ✦ Consider tasks that could be repetitive and where they are, take regular breaks and rotate the type of tasks
- ✦ Always keep items that are regularly used at the height between your knees and shoulders
- ✦ Minimise reaching above your shoulders
- ✦ Avoid forward bending at the waist
- ✦ Avoid sideways bending at the waste while lifting
- ✦ Avoid twisting at the waist while lifting