



MANUAL HANDLING

Toolbox Talks are intended to support workplace health and safety discussions on Saskatchewan job sites.

Manual material handling means lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, holding, supporting or moving a load by hand or bodily force. This can include carrying a toolbox or step ladder, moving boxes of supplies, handling materials on a job site, or positioning heavy or awkward equipment. Loads do not have to be extremely heavy to create risk; size, shape, grip, posture, repetition, distance carried and work area conditions all matter.

Manual material handling is a common cause of musculoskeletal injuries, including strains and sprains to the back, shoulders, neck, arms and legs. These injuries can occur suddenly or develop over time from repeated force, awkward postures, vibration, contact stress or prolonged exertion. Once an injury occurs, it can become a recurring problem if the task and hazards are not corrected.

In Saskatchewan, manual material handling and musculoskeletal injury prevention are addressed under The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020, including requirements related to lifting and handling loads and musculoskeletal injuries. Employers must identify, assess and control risks, provide suitable equipment where reasonably practicable, minimize manual handling where equipment is not practicable, and make sure workers are instructed in safe work practices. Workers must use the equipment, procedures, training and controls provided to protect their health and safety.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER ARE:

Basic Rules for Safe Manual Handling

- ✓ If you do not need to lift or move it manually, do not. Use carts, dollies, forklifts, hoists, pallet jacks or other equipment provided for the task.
- ✓ Plan the lift before starting. Check the weight, size, shape, centre of gravity, travel path, weather or ground conditions, and whether the load can be safely managed alone.
- ✓ Keep the load close to your body and use your legs to generate force. Avoid bending, reaching or twisting through your back.
- ✓ Make sure you have a firm grip and can maintain it for the full movement. Wear suitable gloves when they improve grip or protect your hands from sharp edges, rough surfaces or cold materials.
- ✓ Know where the load is going before you lift. Keep the route clear, stable, well lit and free of ice, mud, debris, cords or other slip and trip hazards. Do not carry a load that blocks your view.
- ✓ If the load is too heavy, awkward, unstable or repetitive, stop and ask for help, change the method, or use mechanical assistance.

Lifting Technique

- ✓ Face the load and position your feet close to it, about hip width apart, with one foot slightly ahead for balance.

- ✓ Bend your knees and hips, keep your back as neutral as possible, and tighten your core before lifting.
- ✓ Get a full hand grip using your palms, not just your fingertips, and keep the load balanced.
- ✓ Lift smoothly with your legs. Do not jerk the load or hold your breath.
- ✓ Carry the load close to your body, preferably between knee and shoulder height, and avoid prolonged carrying where possible.
- ✓ Turn by moving your feet. Do not twist your trunk while lifting, carrying or setting down the load.
- ✓ Set the load down using the same safe body position. Keep fingers and toes clear of pinch points.
- ✓ Report pain, discomfort, near misses, damaged equipment or unsafe conditions to your supervisor so the task can be reviewed and corrected.

Toolbox Attendance

Questions? _____

Concerns? _____

Days since Last Incident: _____

Supervisor/Meeting Leader: _____ Date: _____

Signatures of attendees:

Manager review comments:

Manager signature: _____ Date of Review: _____