

How heavy can an employee lift?

Generally speaking, lifting bulky objects will increase the chance of injuries. Employers should carry out risk assessments for manual handling operations with potential hazards, ensuring that employees have the strength required for lifting the heavy loads. Employers should provide mechanical aids and protective devices to minimise the chance of employees sustaining injuries in handling heavier loads. Employers should, if reasonably practicable, arrange a team of trained staff for team lifting under supervision and with assistance.

Moreover, special attention is required for repetitive conveyance work, employees in unsound health condition and lifting from unusual positions.



Enquiries

If you wish to enquire about this leaflet or require advice on occupational safety and health matters, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of the Labour Department through:

Telephone : 2559 2297(auto-recording service available outside office hours)

Fax : 2915 1410

E-mail : enquiry@labour.gov.hk

Information on the services offered by the Labour Department and on major labour legislation is also available on our website at <http://www.labour.gov.hk>.

For details on the services offered by the Occupational Safety and Health Council, please call 2739 9000.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about unsafe workplaces and work practice, please call the Labour Department's occupational safety and health complaint hotline at 2542 2172. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.

An Employer's Guide to Manual Handling Operation



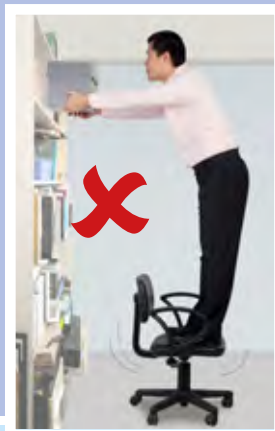
The Occupational Safety and Health Regulation requires that all employers, the person responsible for a workplace and employees have to adopt safety measures to avoid bodily injuries caused by manual handling operations. Besides, the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance further requires that all employers have to protect employees' safety and health while employees should also take care of their own and other people's safety and health and cooperate with employers.

An employer, or a person responsible for a workplace, who fails to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance is, subject to the seriousness of the offence, liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$500,000 and imprisonment for 12 months. For offences under the Occupational Safety and Health Regulation, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for 12 months.

Avoid Musculoskeletal Injuries Caused by Manual Handling Operations

Hong Kong has several thousand cases of occupational injury caused by manual handling operations (hereafter referred to as "conveyance / conveyance work") a year. The losses involved in these injury cases, which include working hours and compensation for work-related injuries, have imposed a heavy burden on the employers, employees and society.

Most cases of musculoskeletal injuries are attributable to poor workplace design, inappropriate way of conveyance and inadequate training. In fact, all these factors can be controlled and the majority of the musculoskeletal injury cases can therefore be avoided.



Employer's Obligations

Employers should provide a workplace properly designed to minimise injury of employees caused by conveyance work. This includes the design of work system, plant, equipment and containers used in the workplace as well as workstation layout.

Prior to conducting conveyance work, employers must carry out risk assessments to identify the risk associated with such work in the workplace. In making assessments, consideration should be given to the following factors:

- ✦ conveyance operations



- ✦ layout of the workplace and workstation
- ✦ employees' work postures and working positions
- ✦ duration and frequency of conducting conveyance work
- ✦ locations of loads and distance of conveyance
- ✦ weight and force required
- ✦ characteristics of loads and equipment
- ✦ work systems
- ✦ working environment
- ✦ skills, experience and training of workers
- ✦ health conditions of workers
- ✦ clothing and personal protective equipment
- ✦ any other factors deemed relevant by employers or employees



The employer should ensure that the record of risk assessment is kept properly and available for inspection by the Occupational Safety Officer of the Labour Department upon request.

Where conveyance work is necessary, employers must provide a combination of the following measures as applicable:

- ✦ appropriate mechanical aids and protective devices
- ✦ enough staff for team lifting
- ✦ training and supervision for staff to conduct team lifting procedures
- ✦ adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to enable employees to work safely



Employers should hold discussions with employees responsible for carrying out conveyance work to determine the working methods, and employ competent persons to assist in implementing the necessary preventive and protective measures as appropriate.