STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Manual Handling and Lifting SOP

Document no.	SOP-SAF-007
Revision	1.0
Owner	Safety Officer
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Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To reduce manual handling injuries by requiring a load assessment, use of mechanical aids where available, and correct lifting technique for any manual lift.

2. Scope

Applies to any employee lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling a load as part of their work, in offices, warehouses, production areas or client sites.

Definitions

Manual handling	Any activity requiring a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or move a load using bodily force.
Mechanical aid	Equipment such as a trolley, hoist, forklift or hand truck used to move a load instead of, or in support of, manual lifting.

3. Responsibilities

Employee	Assesses the load before lifting, uses mechanical aids where available, applies safe lifting technique and reports strain injuries.
Supervisor	Makes sure mechanical aids are available and maintained, and enforces team lifting for loads beyond a safe individual limit.
Safety Officer	Provides manual handling training, reviews injury trends and recommends changes to tasks or equipment.

RACI matrix

Activity	Employee	Supervisor	Safety Officer
Assess the load before lifting	R/A	I	C
Provide and maintain mechanical aids	I	R/A	C
Apply safe lifting technique	R/A	I	C
Arrange a team lift for heavy loads	R	A	I
Deliver manual handling training	I	C	R/A

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Hand trucks, trolleys or dollies
- Hoists or lifting equipment where provided
- Manual handling risk assessment for known heavy or awkward tasks
- Clear, marked walkways free of obstacles
- Manual handling training materials

Personal protective equipment

- Gloves for grip and hand protection
- Safety footwear with slip resistance

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Assess the load** Before lifting, check the load's weight, size, shape and stability, and look for sharp edges or shifting contents that could change how you handle it.	Employee	☐
5.2	**Plan the route** Look at the path you will carry the load along and clear obstacles, confirm doors can be opened in advance, and identify where you will set the load down.	Employee	☐
5.3	**Use a mechanical aid where available** Use a trolley, hand truck, hoist or other mechanical aid instead of a manual lift whenever one is available and suitable for the load. **Checkpoint:** A mechanical aid is used for the task whenever one is available and appropriate for the load.	Employee	☐
5.4	**Position your feet and body** Stand close to the load with feet shoulder-width apart, one foot slightly forward, to give a stable base before lifting.	Employee	☐
5.5	**Bend your knees, not your back** Bend at the knees and hips while keeping your back straight, lowering yourself to the load rather than bending forward from the waist. **Warning:** Bending and twisting your back while lifting is one of the most common causes of manual handling injury.	Employee	☐
5.6	**Get a firm grip and lift smoothly** Get a secure grip on the load using handles if provided, then lift smoothly using your leg muscles, avoiding jerky or sudden movements.	Employee	☐
5.7	**Keep the load close to your body** Carry the load as close to your body as possible, at waist height where practical, since holding it away from your body increases the strain on your back.	Employee	☐
5.8	**Turn your feet instead of twisting** If you need to change direction while carrying a load, move your feet to turn your whole body rather than twisting at the waist.	Employee	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.9	**Team-lift loads beyond a safe individual limit** For loads too heavy, bulky or awkward for one person, arrange a team lift or mechanical aid, coordinating the lift together rather than each person lifting independently or as required by your local regulations.	Supervisor	☐
5.10	**Set the load down with control** Lower the load with a controlled movement, bending your knees again rather than bending forward, and check your fingers are clear before releasing it.	Employee	☐
5.11	**Report strain or discomfort** Report any strain, pain or discomfort from a lift to your supervisor right away, rather than continuing to work through it, so it can be assessed and treated early.	Employee	☐
5.12	**Request reassessment for repetitive tasks** For tasks involving frequent or repetitive lifting, request a manual handling reassessment or refresher training to check whether the task can be improved.	Supervisor	☐

6. Quality checks

- Mechanical aids are available and in working order for known heavy or awkward tasks.
- Employees can demonstrate correct lifting technique during observation.
- Team lifts are used for loads identified as too heavy or awkward for one person.
- Reported strains and discomfort are logged and followed up promptly.

7. Records

- Manual handling training records
- Strain and discomfort incident reports
- Manual handling risk assessments for repetitive tasks

8. KPIs

- Number of manual handling injuries or strains reported per quarter
- Percentage of employees trained in manual handling technique
- Number of tasks converted from manual lifting to mechanical aids

9. Common mistakes

- Bending forward from the waist instead of bending the knees.
- Twisting the back while carrying a load instead of turning the feet.
- Attempting to lift a heavy or awkward load alone instead of getting help.
- Ignoring early discomfort instead of reporting it before it becomes an injury.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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