

Manual handling



Moving loads by hand is a common enough task in many church premises, but it is not without the risk of injury to those involved. Typical injuries include sprains, strains, cuts and even fractures.

Frequently, the term 'manual handling' is used to describe the transporting or supporting of loads by hand or the use of bodily force. This includes lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving loads.

The types of loads handled in church premises can vary widely. They include boxes; bulky or unwieldy furniture (such as chairs, benches etc.); audio visual equipment; general rubbish (which may include breakages, e.g. glass) and so on.

Legal requirements

Generally, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care.

If you are an employer, you must also comply with the Manual Handling Operations Regulations. These require employers to:

- Avoid hazardous manual handling tasks so far as is reasonably practicable
- Make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of any hazardous task that cannot be avoided
- Implement adequate precautions that reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable
- Provide certain information to employees.

Other regulations might also apply in some circumstances. For example, where equipment (such as a trolley) is provided to reduce the risk of injury, the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations would also apply to the safe use of that equipment.

Risk Advice Line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

Hazards to look out for

Some of the typical hazards include:

- Tasks that involve long carrying distances and strenuous pushing or pulling
- Loads that are heavy or bulky; difficult to grasp; unstable; or harmful (for example, sharp or hot)
- Locations that restrict posture; have floors that are bumpy, obstructed, slippery or have variations in levels; or are poorly lit
- Tasks that require unusual capability (that is, above-average strength or agility); endanger those with a health problem or learning/physical disability; or are a danger to pregnant women
- Unsuitable or defective handling aids and equipment (for example, shelf trolley, mop bucket etc.)
- People who may be more prone to injury (e.g. they have a history of back trouble, are pregnant or elderly)*.

Precautions you can take

Some of the typical precautions include:

- Using a suitable lifting aid (for example, a trolley) that is properly maintained
- Avoiding lifting from floor level or above shoulder height, especially heavy loads
- Reducing carrying distances
- Making the load smaller or lighter and easier to lift
- Stacking boxes or other loads evenly
- Removing obstructions to free movement
- Avoiding steps and steep ramps
- Improving lighting
- Using a couple of pairs of hands
- Providing information and training
- Checking individual capability to ensure those more prone to injury do not move things that could put them at increased risk of harm
- Providing personal protective equipment (for example, gloves)*.

*This list is not exhaustive.



Making a start

Action

1. **Identify circumstances where manual handling is required and decide if there is a risk of injury.**

Make a note of these.

Guidance

In deciding if there is a risk of injury, you can look out for the hazards identified above. However, the list is not exhaustive and there may be others to consider reflecting your own particular circumstances.

If you are an employer, you will need to complete formal risk assessments. These should help you identify where manual handling injury could occur and decide if these tasks can be avoided altogether. If this is not possible for hazardous tasks, you will need to make more-specific risk assessments.

With the wide range of manual handling tasks that might be undertaken, deciding when to complete these can be difficult. However, the Health and Safety Executive has provided simple numerical guidelines to help identify where these are necessary.

Your assessments will need to meet certain requirements. For example, they will need to be in writing where you have more than five employees and revised when necessary. They will also have to consider:

- All of the types of manual handling tasks carried out by employees
- The risk factors and associated questions (as set out in Manual Handling Operations Regulations). These include the task; the load; the working environment, individual capability and other factors (e.g. movement or posture hindered by the use of protective clothing).

Further guidance and resources are available at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/index.htm> in particular the leaflet 'Manual handling at work: A brief guide', INDG143.

2. **Check the precautions you have taken are adequate. If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed.**

Make a note of the precautions in place and/or any additional ones that might be required.

Also, note who will be responsible for taking them.

Again, where you have completed formal risk assessments, these will do this for you. They will also provide a useful record of the steps you have taken to identify any necessary precautions.

Obviously, if you can avoid moving the load in the first place or use a handling aid (such as a trolley), this will reduce the risk considerably. Failing this, implementing some of the precautions outlined on the previous page will help prevent injuries.

You can use this list to help decide if any further precautions are necessary. However, it is not exhaustive, and the precautions you take will need to reflect your own particular circumstances.

Making a start

Action

- 3. Ensure that the precautions you have identified are taken and remain effective.**

Make a note of any checks or inspections you make to ensure these precautions are being taken or equipment remains safe.

- 4. Ensure that employees (and volunteers in these circumstances) know how to use any equipment provided or how to lift safely.**

Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.

- 5. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for preventing injury from manual handling tasks.**

Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.

Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above.

Guidance

One typical precaution commonly used is the provision of manual handling aids (such as a sack truck). Clearly, these need to be suitable (i.e. strong and robust enough) for their intended use.

In many circumstances, this equipment is quite low-tech, being basic in design. Despite this, it should still be properly checked and maintained in accordance with any manufacturer's instructions provided. Where defects are identified, these should be repaired, particularly damage to wheels or the handling mechanism.

The level of information and training required will vary depending on the tasks involved, reflecting your particular circumstances. If you have completed formal risk assessments, these will help you determine what is necessary.

For many smaller churches, manual handling tasks are usually low risk, involving small items and are infrequent. Here, making sure employees and volunteers receive simple instruction on how to lift correctly or use any handling aids properly would be sufficient. In many cases, an understanding of any user instructions affixed to the equipment would be enough.

Where manual handling tasks are more frequent, hazardous or there are more employees involved, you may have to provide formal training and information. This may need to be delivered by someone who is competent, reflecting the particular risks in your church. The Health and Safety Executive broadly outlines what might be required here and can be viewed at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/index.htm>.

All persons required to inspect, repair and maintain equipment should be provided with appropriate training and information.

You should keep records of any information or training you provide. These should contain details relating to the persons who were trained (including their signatures to say that they have received and understood the training); when they were trained and by whom; an overview of the training that was provided etc.

If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record these as part of it. You can use our Church Health and Safety Policy template if you haven't done this and need one to comply with health and safety law.

In the event of a claim, paperwork will be important. So where hazardous manual handling tasks are carried out, you should retain the records mentioned.

Want to know more?

We have produced other useful resources to help you get started or simply check the adequacy of what you have already done. All are available at https://ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/articles/?q=&facet_productService=&facet_articleType=35515

Further guidance and resources are also available at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/index.htm>

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Need to report an incident involving an injury?

If an incident occurs that may result in a claim for injury, please retain any accident investigation records, e.g. accident book entry, photos etc. and contact our specialist claims team on **0345 603 8381** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm) for advice. Where you have received correspondence about a claim being made against you, it is important that you notify us immediately and email a copy to our experts on casualtyclaims@ecclesiastical.com

Policy cover queries

For queries about your policy cover, call our specialist church team on **0345 777 3322** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at churchteam@ecclesiastical.com.

Alternatively, please visit www.ecclesiastical.com/church.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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