

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to provide a process for identifying and controlling the risk associated with hazardous manual handling activities

## 2. Approval

Managing Director

## 3. Definitions

**Manual Handling** means any activity requiring the use of force by a person to lift, push, pull, carry or restrain an object, person or animal.

**Hazardous manual handling** means manual handling activities that involve the following:

- repetitive or sustained application of force
- repetitive or sustained awkward posture
- repetitive or sustained movement
- application of high force
- exposure to sustained vibration
- handling live people or animals
- handling loads that are unstable, unbalanced or difficult to move

**Musculoskeletal disorder (MSD)** is an injury, illness, or disease that arises in whole or in part from manual handling tasks, whether suddenly or over a long period of time.

**Risk** means the likelihood or probability that a hazard may cause harm.

**Risk Assessment** means a process that seeks to identify hazards; then determine the level of risk by taking into account the likelihood that someone will be injured or something damaged by the hazard, the frequency of contact or exposure to the hazard, the level of exposure and the adequacy of any existing control measures.

**Risk Control** means the use of measures to control the risk to an acceptable level.

## 4. Manual Handling Activities

4.1 Manual handling covers a wide range of activities within East Gippsland Water including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, holding, throwing and carrying. It also includes repetitive tasks such as packing; word processing; assembling; cleaning and sorting; digging; using hand tools; and operating machinery and equipment.

4.2 **Hazardous manual handling** activities are those that, statistically, present the greatest risk of a person incurring a sprain or strain injury.

4.3 The major hazard associated with in appropriate manual handling is Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD), also referred to as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS) and Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD). Such injuries are characterised by symptoms of discomfort or persistent pain in muscles, tendons and other soft tissues, with or without obvious visible symptoms (e.g. swelling). Eye soreness and pain in the wrist and lower arm are common forms of MSD associated with office or 'close work' using small hand tools.

- 4.4 Another common form of MSD is injury to the spine or muscles, commonly the back. Such injuries may prevent that person from being able to conduct certain types of manual handling, or render them susceptible to the same injury at a later stage. In severe cases, persons can suffer long term (or life long) debilitation.
- 4.5 Offices are not traditionally associated with manual handling risks; however, there are many heavy items such as computers and boxes of stationary or archive paper, which are heavy enough to present a potential risk when lifted. Poorly designed work practices with computer keyboard input can also present problems. MSD described above is also associated with office work.

## **5. Procedure**

Part 3.1 of the OHS Regulations 2007 require that hazardous manual handling activities be identified and measures to control the risk of injury be implemented. The regulations also require that risk control measures be reviewed on certain occasions (see section 5.4).

- 5.1 Team leaders / supervisors are to ensure that hazardous manual handling activities are identified using Form 048 Field Work Hazard Identification and Control Checklist and, if necessary, Form 047 - Checklist for Identifying Hazardous Manual Handling Tasks.
- 5.2 Where a hazardous manual handling activity is identified that cannot be satisfactorily controlled, the OHS Officer (OHSO) is to be notified. The OHSO may then complete a formal risk assessment using the WorkSafe Manual Handling Risk Assessment Form.
- 5.3 Appropriate risk control measures must be applied to eliminate, reduce, or manage the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 5.4 Periodic review of risk controls, and revision if necessary, is to be undertaken when:
- the hazardous manual handling task has changed in some way,
  - before an object is used for another purpose for which it was designed if that other purpose may result in an employee undertaking hazardous manual handling,
  - new information about the task becomes known,
  - an incident involving hazardous manual handling or report of MSD associated with the task is made, or
  - after receiving a request from a Health and Safety Representative.

Reviews of risk controls under these circumstances will be conducted by the OHSO or Manager Business Risk and Compliance.

Team leaders / supervisors are to communicate task changes to the OHSO to facilitate this review.

- 5.5 Copies of completed Manual Handling Risk Assessment Forms are to be retained by the OHSO, and will be used as the basis for the introduction of manual handling risk control measures, including training in the use of the control measure. Original risk assessment forms completed following a workplace injury will be maintained as part of the incident investigation and filed in the Accident and Incident Manuals located at relevant depots and the Bairnsdale Office (refer SOP 104).

## **6. Training**

All supervisors and other relevant staff will be trained in regard to this SOP.

## **7. References**

The main legislative and other references relevant to this SOP are:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007, Part 3.1
- Code of Practice for Manual Handling
- EGW SOP 104 - OHS Incident Reporting and Investigation

## **8. Referenced Forms**

- Form 047 Checklist for Identifying Hazardous Manual Handling Tasks
- Form 048 Field Work Hazard Identification and Control Checklist
- WorkSafe Form for Assessing and Controlling Manual Handling Risk

## **9. Risk Management**

This SOP forms part of East Gippsland Water's Risk Management Program.