

GUIDANCE NOTES - MANUAL HANDLING

INTRODUCTION

The correct method of lifting makes the job easier, less tiring and is less likely to lead to back injuries. Lifting is to be done using the correct muscles - the muscles of the back and abdomen are weak, the leg and thigh muscles are strong. The spine has a natural shape when man is standing; when he bends over the back becomes arched and weaker. Therefore, if the back can be kept straight and the muscles of the legs and thighs utilised, with the load kept close to the body a man can act as a human elevator, resulting in far heavier loads being lifted with far less effort.

PRINCIPLES

There are six significant points in manual handling. These are:

1. **Grip:** A good grip makes maximum use of the palm of the hand, the ball of the thumb and the base of the fingers. Considerable damage can be caused by using the sensitive fingertips and continued use of them leads to strained fingers and forearms;
2. **Back:** The back is to be kept straight to maintain its natural and strongest position. This necessitates bending at the knees and ankles to get close to the load and then to raise it, pushing upwards with the leg muscles;
3. **Chin:** The chin is to be kept well in so that it is near the chest. This helps to keep the spine in its natural position;
4. **Feet:** The correct position of the feet is approximately the width of the hips apart, with one foot slightly in front of the other. This position provides a stable base as the load is lifted;
5. **Arms:** Arms are to be kept as close to the body as possible so that the body does not become unbalanced;
6. **Body:** The body, being kept in its normal position, is to act as a counterweight for the load.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

1. A person should always be able to see where he or she is going;
2. Before lifting, it is good practice to look over the route to ensure that there are no obstructions or obstacles in the way;
3. Stacking is only to be as high as it is possible to go with the elbows still tucked into the sides;
4. If loads are unwieldy or irregular in shape, hand hooks or other lifting aids are to be used;
5. If there is uncertainty as to the weight of the object to be lifted, or the person who is to do the lifting is unsure of his or her capabilities, help is to be sought.

