

IMPORTANCE OF MANUAL HANDLING TRAINING

Almost one third of all workplace accidents reported to the Health & Safety Authority (HSA) are due to incorrect manual handling procedures. Approximately 49% of accidents result in back injury, although the hands, arms and feet may also be injured.

There are enormous costs associated with these accidents and injuries both in human and monetary terms, this is mainly due to the chronic nature of the injury.

With correct manual handling training these types of accidents can be avoided or reduced. This type of training can be beneficial for employees' personal well-being by instilling good lifting techniques for both work and home.

Furthermore, manual handling training is an essential part of your legal obligations as an employer. Under Section 57 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (No. 10 of 2005), it is a legal requirement of all employers to ensure that all their staff have received manual handling training. Employees are required to receive refresher training at intervals not more than every three years and also if there is any major changes in the work or equipment. The Act states that all employees must receive Manual Handling training, regardless of their role. It is a common misunderstanding that employees who are involved in administrative or office duties do not require Manual Handling training – this is not the case.

Under the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act, it dictates the duties of both the employer and the employee. For the employer their duties include providing a safe place of work, providing training, providing PPE, providing safe access and egress and safe systems of work. For the employee their duties include complying with statutory regulations, no improper conduct at work, using the PPE, reporting any defect in machinery, attending training and ensuring that the workplace is a safe one for yourself, your colleague and others (which includes customers, suppliers etc.)

In a recent case, which was highlighted in the media, it stated how important it is that training takes place and that there is a record of same. The case also highlighted that the exercise which was carried out, was not remotely comparable to the lifting exercise which the employee may have to do in the course of work duties. Therefore, it is important that all staff record their attendance for the training and if possible, to conduct the practical assessment on site – being able to use similar items which employees would be required to lift/move/carry etc.

Another High Court Case involving an employee who suffered a back injury at work saw him awarded €153,000 compensation for his workplace accident. The 47 year old worked as a “picker” in a grocery retail distribution centre and his job involved moving stock from pallets to trollies for onward transport. At the time of his accident, he was lifting five trays of yogurt from a pallet to a cage and had squatted down. He pulled the trays towards him and lifted them but as he turned to put them into the cage he experienced a sharp pain in his back and had to go home early. He claimed that not only was he working to unreasonable targets, but that he was not adequately trained in the correct technique with regard to turning or twisting whilst lifting. Because the extent of the employee's injuries left him “permanently disabled in the work aspects of his life” and he continues to have frequent back pain, the judge in this case awarded him a sum of €153,000.

Ensuring that all employees are trained in manual handling is an investment for employers as introducing correct manual handling procedures will prevent injuries and will therefore prevent claims arising from employees who suffer injuries as a result of poor manual handling techniques.

Manual Handling training gives employees the knowledge and skills to assess whether or not it is safe to carry out a task and how to safely handle loads. This training also give participants an understanding of the anatomy of the spine, which in turn, leads to a better understanding of how easily back injuries can occur, and what general measures should be taken at work and at home to preach their back. Manual Handling training can be carried out with groups of staff on your premises and will assess your employees' theoretical and practical understanding of Safe Lifting Principles. Proof of this understanding is key when demonstrating fulfilment of your legal obligations.

For information relating to Manual Handling for your Company please contact one of our Certified Manual Handling Instructors on (066)7102887 or info@thehrsuiteonline.com

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