

**MANUAL HANDLING**

**National Standard  
[NOHSC:1001(1990)]**

**National Code of Practice  
[NOHSC:2005(1990)]**

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## **FOREWORD**

The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) is a tripartite body established by the Commonwealth Government to develop, facilitate and implement a national occupational health and safety strategy.

This strategy includes standards development, the development of hazard-specific preventive strategies, research, training, information collection and dissemination and the development of common approaches to occupational health and safety legislation.

The National Commission comprises representatives of the peak employee and employer bodies - the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) - as well as the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.

Consistent with the National Commission's philosophy of consultation, tripartite standing committees have been established to deal with issues relating to standards development and research. Expert groups may be established to provide advice to the standing committees on those issues with which the National Commission is concerned.

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## PREFACE

Over recent years, extensive deliberations have taken place within the National Commission and in the public arena on the development of guidelines on manual handling. As a result, a *Draft National Standard and Draft Code of Practice for Manual Handling* was developed and released for public comment in February 1989.

The draft was based on the Victorian Department of Labour's *Occupational Health and Safety (Manual Handling) Regulations 1988* and the associated *Manual Handling Code of Practice*. These instruments had tripartite endorsement. The National Commission gratefully acknowledges the Victorian Department of Labour's cooperation in this matter.

The principal feature of this national code of practice is the provision of a multifactorial approach to risk identification, assessment and control to be applied to manual handling tasks. This was considered to be a more appropriate method than the exclusive use of weight limits alone.

The National Commission, having considered public comment on the draft document, now declares a final *National Standard for Manual Handling* and a final *National Code of Practice for Manual Handling* under s.38 (1) of the *National Occupational Health and Safety Commission Act 1985* (Cwlth).

**NATIONAL STANDARD**  
**FOR**  
**MANUAL HANDLING**  
**[NOHSC:1001(1990)]**

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## 1. TITLE

- 1.1 This national standard may be cited as the *National Standard for Manual Handling*.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

**2.1** The objectives of this national standard are:

- (a)** to prevent the occurrence of injury and/or reduce the severity of injuries resulting from manual handling tasks in workplaces; and
- (b)** to require employers to identify, assess and control risks arising from manual handling activities in workplaces.

### **3. DESIGN**

**3.1** An employer shall take all workable steps to make sure:

- (a)** that the plant, equipment and containers used in the workplace are designed, constructed and maintained to be, as far as workable, safe and without risk to health and safety when manually handled;
- (b)** that the work practices carried out in the workplace involving manual handling are designed to be, as far as workable, safe and without risk to health and safety; and
- (c)** that the working environment is designed to be, as far as workable, consistent with safe manual handling activities.

## **4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**4.1** An employer shall ensure that manual handling, which is likely to be a risk to health and safety, is examined and assessed.

**4.2** Risk assessment shall be done in consultation with the employees who are required to carry out the manual handling and their representative(s) on health and safety issues.

**4.3** The assessment shall take into account the following factors:

- (a)** actions and movements;
- (b)** workplace and workstation layout;
- (c)** working posture and position;
- (d)** duration and frequency of manual handling;
- (e)** location of loads and distances moved;
- (f)** weights and forces;
- (g)** characteristics of loads and equipment;
- (h)** work organisation;
- (i)** work environment;
- (j)** skills and experience;
- (k)** age;
- (l)** clothing;
- (m)** special needs (temporary or permanent); and
- (n)** any other factors considered relevant by the employer, the employees or their representative(s) on health and safety issues.

## **5. RISK CONTROL**

**5.1** An employer shall ensure, as far as workable, that the risks associated with manual handling are controlled.

**5.2** Risk control shall be done in consultation with the employees who are required to carry out the manual handling and their representative(s) on health and safety issues.

**5.3** The employer shall, if manual handling has been assessed as a risk:

- (a)** redesign the manual handling task to eliminate or control the risk factors; and
- (b)** ensure that employees involved in manual handling receive appropriate training, including training in safe manual handling techniques.

**5.4** Where redesign is not workable, or as a short term/temporary measure, the employer shall:

- (a)** provide mechanical aids and/or personal protective equipment, and/or arrange for team lifting in order to reduce the risk; and/or
- (b)** ensure that employees receive appropriate training in methods of manual handling appropriate for that manual handling task and/or in the correct use of the mechanical aids and/or personal protective equipment and/or team lifting procedures.

## **6. EMPLOYEE DUTIES**

**6.1** Where an employee has received appropriate training in safe manual handling techniques (as in 5.3(b)), the employee shall use those techniques where possible.

**6.2** Where an employee has received appropriate training in the correct use of mechanical aids, personal protective equipment or team lifting procedures (as in 5.4(b)), the employee shall use that training where possible.

## 7. DEFINITIONS

**7.1** In this national standard, unless the contrary appears, the following interpretation of terms is used:

### **Assessed as a risk**

In relation to a manual handling task, means found, as a result of an assessment in accordance with Section 4 of this national standard, to be a risk to health and/or safety.

### **Consultation**

Consultation involves the sharing of information and exchange of views between managers, workers and/or their representative(s) on health and safety issues. It includes the opportunity to contribute to decision making in a timely fashion to resolve manual handling risk(s).

### **Employee**

An individual who works under a contract of employment, apprenticeship or traineeship.

### **Employees' representative(s) on health and safety issues**

Includes, where established in the workplace, a health and safety committee or person(s) elected to represent a group of workers on health and safety matters.

### **Employer**

A corporation or an individual who employs persons under contract of employment, apprenticeship or traineeship.

*Note:* The definition of employer includes the *self-employed* which means a person who works for gain, other than under a contract of employment or apprenticeship, whether or not that person employs others.

### **Force**

Any action that tends to maintain the position of an animate or inanimate object, to alter the position of an animate or inanimate object, or to distort it.

### **Hazard**

Anything that has the potential to result in harm to a person.

### **Manual handling**

Means any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any animate or inanimate object.

### **Plant**

Includes any machinery, equipment, appliance, implement and tool, and anything fitted or connected to them.

**Risk factor**

Is a factor that contributes to increased risk of manual handling injury.

**Shall**

Indicates that a requirement is mandatory.

**Should**

Indicates a recommendation.

**Special needs**

Refers to the special needs of a particular individual, either temporary or permanent.

**Weight**

The mass of an object (expressed in kilograms).

**Workable**

This term encompasses the meaning of 'practicable' in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, 'reasonably practicable' in New South Wales and South Australia and a 'reasonable precaution' in Tasmania.

Workable having regard to:

- (a) the severity of the hazard or risk in question;
- (b) the state of knowledge about that hazard or risk and any ways or removing or mitigating that hazard or risk;
- (c) the availability and suitability of ways to remove or mitigate that hazard or risk; and
- (d) the cost of removing or mitigating that hazard or risk.

**Workplace**

The premises of the employer and any place where an employee may be present in the exercise of his/her duties.