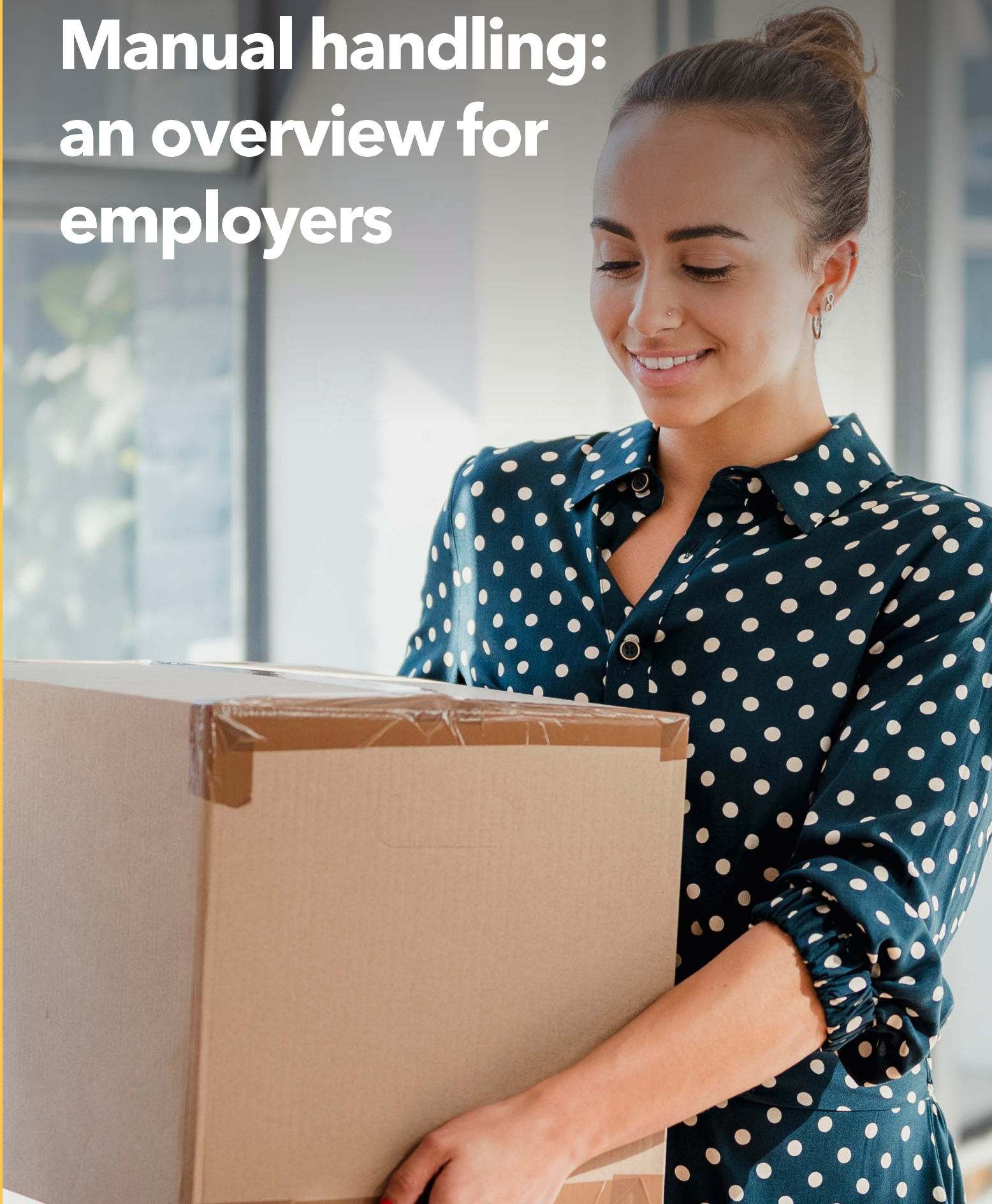


A free guide from Citation's experts

Manual handling: an overview for employers



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Earlier this year, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) confirmed that they will be prioritising inspecting significant health risks from musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) associated with manual handling activities and repetitive tasks in the workplace.

It's unlikely that any workplace is free from manual handling hazards. Even low-risk environments such as offices will require items to be moved, lifted and adjusted, such as printer paper, furniture, computers and equipment. It's important that these hazards are managed.

In this guide, our Health & Safety experts have put together a quick overview, for employers in any industry, to help get a grip on what your legal obligations are when it comes to properly training your people in correct manual handling techniques and how to support your employees where manual handling in the workplace is necessary.

What is manual handling?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines Manual Handling as:



Manual handling relates to the moving of items either by lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing or pulling.

Put simply, manual handling is any task that requires transporting or supporting a 'load' (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying thereof) by hand or by bodily force.

A 'load' includes an object such as a box or any person or animal.



What does the law say?

The **Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974** requires employers to provide whatever information, instruction, training, and supervision necessary to make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their employees in the workplace.

This applies to your obligations to make sure any manual handling tasks are completed safely and risks are mitigated.

Manual handling is also covered in at least two more regulations:

The **Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992** requires employers to put in place measures so that within the workplace, employees:

The 'assess' part of the above list is governed by the **Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999**, which outlines the requirements for employers to complete relevant risk assessments for their business.

Employees also have duties under the Regulations too.

They are:

- Follow appropriate systems of work and make proper use of equipment provided for their safety.
- Cooperate with their employer on Health & Safety issues.
- Inform the employer if they identify any hazardous manual handling operations.
- Take care to ensure that their activities do not put others at risk.



Avoid hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable.



Assess the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided.



Reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling to as low as reasonably practicable.



Train workers in good manual handling techniques.



What are the risks of getting manual handling wrong?

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) are one of the most common workplace illnesses in the United Kingdom. They include problems such as lower back pain, injuries to the joints, wrists, knees etc. and repetitive strain injuries (caused by doing the same movement on a regular basis).

These are commonly recognised as cumulative injuries, i.e. injuries that are built up over a period of time without the person necessarily being aware that damage is being caused.

Common causes of MSDs include:



- Handling loads while in poor health
- Sudden, rapid movements
- Adopting awkward postures.
- Handling loads while seated.
- Lifting heavy loads.
- Repetitive lifting or movements.
- Handling loads for long periods.
- Environmental factors e.g. cold temperatures.

How to start identifying manual handling hazards in your workplace

The first place to start is to look at the different operations in your workplace and consider where manual handling tasks usually take place. This could take into account processes including:

Repetitive processes, such as lifting items into a machine and removing them again

- Sustaining an awkward posture
- Lifting unstable or unbalanced loads
- Lifting and moving people or animals
- Exposure to machinery that has a sustained vibration

It's also a good idea to consult with your people in order to identify any areas which you might miss and if you employ over five people, you're legally required to record any hazards and control measures you've identified on a risk assessment.

The importance of a manual handling risk assessment

Once you've identified any hazards, you need to create a risk assessment in order to identify controls to reduce the risk of harm occurring.

It's good practice to consult with your employees once you've arrived at some of the control measures, as your people will often have useful ideas and practical solutions to reduce the likelihood of harm arising from manual handling.

Your risk assessments must always be performed by a competent person.

How can Citation help?

Here at Citation, our expert Health & Safety team have many years of experience helping business identify manual handling hazards and empowering employers to create robust risk assessments and put in place control measures that protect their people and their business.

If you'd like to make our team of professionals an extension of your team to help you get on top of your regulatory responsibilities and duties, simply give us a call on **0345 844 1111** to talk through your business needs. Or fill out your details in our call-back form [here](#) and we'll be in touch.