



Australian Government

Comcare






# RISK MANAGEMENT PROMPT FOR HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS

This document should be read in conjunction with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act), *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* (WHS Regulations) and the *Work Health and Safety Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks* (HMT CoP)

## 1. IDENTIFY

### What is a hazardous manual task (HMT)?

A HMT requires a person to lift, lower, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing. HMTs involve one or more of the following characteristics:

 <b>Movement</b> > Repetitive: using the same parts of the body to repeat similar movements over a period of time.	 <b>Vibration</b> > Whole body: when vibration is transmitted through the whole body usually via a supporting surface, for example, a seat or floor in heavy vehicles or machinery > Hand-arm: when vibration is transferred through a vibrating tool, steering wheel or machinery controls.
 <b>Posture</b> > Sustained: where a part of or the whole body is kept in the same position for a prolonged period > Awkward: where any part of the body is in an uncomfortable or unnatural position; postures that are unbalanced or asymmetrical or that require extreme joint angles, bending, twisting or reaching.	 <b>Force</b> > Repetitive: using force repeatedly over a period of time to move or support an object > Sustained: occurs when force is applied continuously over a period of time > High: occurs in any task that a worker describes as physically demanding, a worker needs help to do because of the effort required and/or requires a stronger person or two people to do the task > Sudden: task where force is applied suddenly and with speed resulting in jerky or unexpected movements while handling an item or load.
 <b>Psychosocial issues</b> <i>Research states that psychosocial issues can contribute to an increased risk of musculoskeletal disorders.</i> > Organisational: high workloads, poor leadership and support, low job control, poor change management > Relationships: Poor relationship with the supervisor, poor relationship with the team, poor reward and recognition.	

## 2. ASSESS

### What is the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)?

The risk of a worker developing a MSD will depend on the following:

- > How often and how long specific postures, movements and/or forces are held or performed (repetitive is more than twice per minute and sustained is held for more than 30 seconds)
- > The duration of the task (long duration is more than two hours over a whole shift and/or continuously for more than 30 minutes at a time)
- > If the task involves high or sudden force
- > If the task involves vibration
- > If there are psychosocial issues involved, such as high workloads.

### What are the sources of risk?

Consider the following sources of risk:

- > Work area design and layout
- > The nature, size, weight or number of people, animals or things handled
- > Systems of work and organisational issues
- > Workplace environment and relationships.

## 3. CONTROL

When controlling the sources of risk consider the following:

- > Is the task necessary?
- > Can the source of risk be eliminated or minimised?
- > Can mechanical aids be used to perform the task?
- > What training is needed to support the control measures?
- > Can the job design be amended to reduce identified risk?

Section 17 of the WHS Act, WHS Regulations and HMT CoP require that risks to health and safety be eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable:

**A RISK CONTROL IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** when:

- > repetitive movement or repetitive force is performed **more than twice per minute**, or
- > sustained posture or sustained force is held for **more than 30 seconds**, and
- > the task is performed for **more than two hours over a shift or continuously for more than 30 minutes at a time**
- > **any** high or sudden force is present
- > **psychosocial issues** are identified
- > prevention systems are **not applied** to psychosocial issues
- > **vibration exists**, including whole body and hand-arm vibration.  
*See [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) for vibration information*

## 4. REVIEW

Continuously monitor and evaluate. Control measures that have been implemented must be reviewed in the following circumstances:

- > When the control measure does not minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable
- > Before a change at the workplace that is likely to give rise to a new or different health and safety risk that the control measure may not effectively control
- > If a new hazard or risk is identified
- > If the results of consultation indicate that a review is necessary
- > If a health and safety representative (HSR) requests a review.