

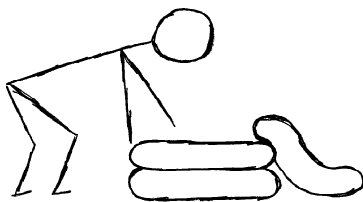
# Manual Handling of Bags

Thousands of workers suffer painful injuries while performing manual work. Most manual handling injuries result in back pain or injury. A manual handling injury may occur suddenly or develop gradually over years as the result of cumulative hidden damage. The cost of manual handling injuries is enormous in terms of human, financial and social costs to employees, employers, and the community.

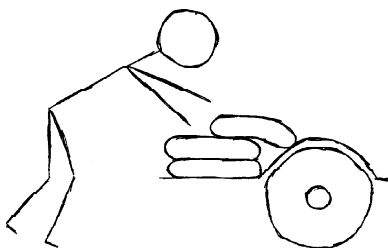
Incorrect manual handling technique, when handling loads such as bags, is a major cause of musculoskeletal injury in New Zealand. The requirement to lift bags is common to many industries including the agriculture, construction, food processing and health industries.

The risk involved when manually handling bags is increased when the load is above the 16-20kg range. It is further increased when bags are:

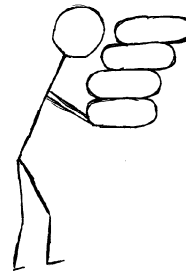
- Lifted from the ground (bending down);



- Lifted out of a ute or trailer (reaching forward while bending);



- Carried over a long distance;
- Handled in large numbers in one period (e.g. unloading a truck);



or,

- Lifted and the person then rotates their body without moving their feet.

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 requires employers to identify hazards, and control the hazard(s) according to the hierarchy of elimination, isolation, and minimisation.

To control risks involves taking all reasonably practicable steps to eliminate, isolate and minimise these risks.

Steps that can be taken to minimise the risks could include:

- Using smaller sized bags whenever possible;
- Delivering bags as close as possible to the work area;
- Using mechanical lifting devices for unloading/loading trucks;
- Using trolleys, wheelbarrows and other aids to assist with moving bags;
- Ensuring workers who handle bags and other heavy items receive training in lifting techniques;

- Arranging the work to minimise the need for handling bags;
- Storing bags as close as possible to waist height if shelves or racks are used; and,
- Maintaining clear space around and above stored bags so that they can be lifted without awkward postures.

Manual handling of bags and resultant injuries can often occur as the body may be still cold and stiff from the previous night's rest. Therefore, it is

important to avoid an injury by warming up cold muscles. Stretching will help avoid a soft tissue injury such as a sprain or strain as it stimulates blood flow through the body, stretches tendons, and relaxes muscles.

If you remember to warm-up before work by doing stretches, and minimise the risks by using the techniques suggested, your risk of injury due to manual handling will be reduced.

---