



Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Implementation of EC Directive 90/269/EC MERCHANT SHIPPING AND FISHING VESSELS (MANUAL HANDLING OPERATIONS) REGULATIONS 1998

Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators and Managers, Masters, Officers and Ratings of Merchant Vessels, and Skippers and Crew on Fishing Vessels.

This notice should be read in conjunction with the regulations above and with MGN 20(M+F)

Summary

- This Marine Guidance Note gives advice on new regulations regarding manual handling at work.
- It contains guidance on the factors affecting the risks from manual handling, with particular reference to work on board ship.

The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Manual Handling Operations) Regulations 1998 (S.I. 1998/2857) come into force on 31 December 1998. The Regulations implement for the maritime sector Council Directive 90/269/EC on the minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk particularly of back injury to workers. The Regulations apply to United Kingdom ships and to other ships when they are in United Kingdom waters.

Copies of the Regulations, priced £1.95 are available from The Stationery Office Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London, SW8 5DT. Tel (orders) 0171 873 9090; (enquiries) 0171 873 0011. Fax (orders) 0171 873 8200. Copies may also be ordered through the Stationery Office's bookshops, its accredited agents (see Yellow Pages) or from any good bookseller.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY : MANUAL HANDLING

Introduction:

1. The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997¹ (the "General Duties" regulations) require employers to assess the risks to workers arising from their work, and to do what is reasonably practicable to control those risks.

Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessel (Manual Handling Operations) Regulations 1998

2. These regulations address one particular area of risk - injury from manual handling of loads. They supplement and expand on the general duties contained in the MS and FV (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997. Musculo-skeletal injuries make up a significant proportion of reported injuries and accidents at sea.
3. The Regulations implement for the maritime sector an EC directive, and mirror land-based legislation made under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Duties of employers (regulation 5)

4. As with the General Duties regulations, these regulations place duties on employers, or, if the employer is not "in control of the matter", extend the duty to any person who is in control of the matter.
5. The employer is required to take steps to avoid the need for workers to carry out manual handling of loads which may cause injury, so far as is reasonably practicable. Since this is not always possible, the regulations also require the employer to carry out a risk assessment of any manual handling operations which present a risk of injury. The schedule to the regulations, reproduced in the Annex to this notice, with some additional guidance, specifies factors which should be considered in preparing that assessment. Guidance on risk assessment is given in MGN 20.

6. Steps must be taken to reduce the risk of injury to the lowest possible level. Where reasonably practicable, information about the weight of any load and any off-centre weighting must be provided to workers. This information may consist of "general indications" or "where it is reasonably practicable to do so, precise information".
7. Workers must also be provided with proper training and information on how to handle loads correctly, and of any risks to their health and safety from incorrect handling.

Duties of workers

8. Workers are required to use any system of work the employer has provided under these regulations to reduce the risk of injury from the handling of loads.

Guidance

9. Guidance on the correct handling of loads is given in Chapter 19 of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

¹S.I. 1997/2962.

Examples of the factors for consideration when making an assessment of manual handling operations or providing instruction for workers (Regulation 5(2)(a)).

Plain text gives the general factors and questions to be considered in the risk assessment carried out under regulation 5(2)(a) from the Schedule to the Regulations.

Additional specific factors which may be found on board ship are included for guidance (text in italics).

Factors	Questions
<p>1 The tasks</p>	<p>Do they involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - activity which is too strenuous; - holding or manipulating loads at distance from trunk; - unsatisfactory or unstable bodily movement or posture, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> twisting the trunk? stooping? reaching upward? working in a cramped or confined space? - excessive movement of loads, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> excessive lifting or lowering distances? excessive carrying distances? - risk of sudden movement of loads? - frequent or prolonged physical effort, particularly affecting the spine? - insufficient rest or recovery periods? - a rate of work imposed by a process? - <i>climbing up or down stairs or ladders?</i> - <i>handling while seated?</i> - <i>team handling?</i> - <i>use of special equipment?</i>
<p>2 The loads</p>	<p>Are they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - heavy? - bulky or unwieldy or difficult to grasp? - unstable, or with contents likely to shift? - likely, because of their contours and/or consistency, to injure workers, particularly if the individual collides with someone or something? - <i>wet, slippery, very cold or hot and therefore difficult to hold?</i> - <i>sharp?</i> - <i>potentially damaging/dangerous if dropped?</i>
<p>3 The working environment</p>	<p>Are there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - space constraints preventing handling loads at a safe height or with good posture? - uneven, slippery or unstable deck surface? - variations in level of deck surfaces (eg door sills) or work surfaces? - extremes of temperature or humidity?

Factors

Questions

- *Has account been taken of the sea-state, wind speed and the unpredictable movement of the deck?*
- *Are there steps, stairs, ladders or self-closing doors to be negotiated?*
- *Is the area adequately lit?*
- *Is movement hindered by personal protective equipment or by clothing?*

4 Individual capability

Is the individual:

- *physically unsuited to carry out the task, either because of the nature of the task or because of a need to protect an individual from a danger which specifically affects him? ie does the job require unusual strength, height, etc? Is there a hazard to those who might reasonably be considered unsuited to the task? Does it pose risks to those who are pregnant or have a health problem?*
- *wearing unsuitable clothing footwear or other personal effects?*
- *inadequately experienced or trained?*
- *inadequately equipped?*