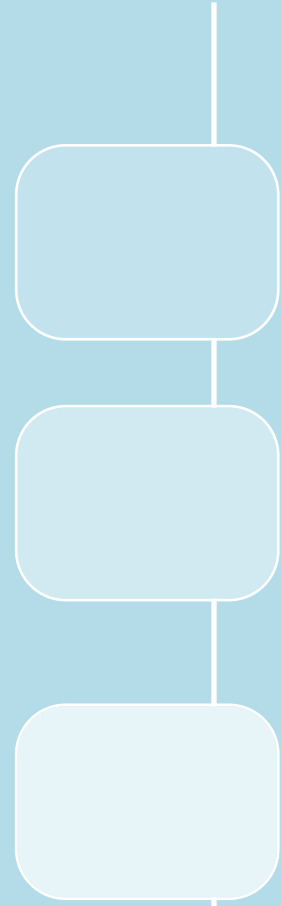


Lifting and Carrying



NASUWT Northern Ireland
Ben Madigan House
Edgewater Office Park, Edgewater Road
Belfast BT3 9JQ

Tel: 028 9078 4480
E-mail: rc-nireland@mail.nasuwat.org.uk
Website: www.nasuwat.org.uk

The largest teachers' union in Northern Ireland

16/07018 Northern Ireland

health&safety
at work

The largest teachers' union in Northern Ireland

This leaflet provides information and advice relating to lifting and carrying procedures in schools and colleges.

Manual handling problems in schools and colleges

A significant proportion of all accidents involving teachers are caused by moving heavy objects. Often this produces serious, long-lasting spine and back muscle injury.

Teachers cannot be required to lift heavy objects and have a duty, under the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 (HASAWNI), to take care of themselves.

Employers' responsibilities

It is the duty of every employer to provide a healthy and safe workplace as set out in the HASAWNI Order.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 require employers to carry out a risk assessment of the dangers to employees caused by lifting and handling activities. The employer must then take steps to remove, or at least reduce, the risks identified.

The responsibility for carrying out this risk assessment falls entirely upon the employer, although all employees have a responsibility to avoid risk of damage to themselves. The employer should ensure that:

- all staff are aware of risks attached to lifting and carrying inappropriate loads; and
- there is an expectation for correct methods to be employed when it is necessary to move large, awkward or heavy loads.

Assessing the risks

Employers should undertake a risk assessment of those tasks that staff are expected to perform and the circumstances under which they are expected to perform them. Consideration should be given to the expectations placed upon staff and to the working practices that are commonly employed, including:

- Are staff expected to move equipment, furniture, or materials?
- Are staff expected to lift or carry pupils either as part of their daily work or in cases of injury, illness or accident?

Adequate consideration should be given to women handling loads during pregnancy and the three months following confinement.

Members should not place themselves at risk of injury by undertaking such activities including lifting and carrying.

1. The provision of assistance

Wherever necessary, arrangements should be made for appropriately trained support staff or other trained persons to move large, awkward or heavy loads. These staff should have access to the necessary trolleys, carts or other mechanical aids to carry out the task.

2. Training in lifting and carrying

If a task involves the moving, setting up or putting away of heavy equipment, lifting and handling aids should be provided and training should have been given for the task. If appropriate equipment or training in the use of such equipment has not been provided, staff should not improvise but should request that suitable provisions are made or that arrangements are made for suitably qualified persons to carry out the work.

3. Assessing the weight of loads

While there are no limits set out for optimum loads, the Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 state that careful consideration should be given not only to the 'load', but also to its shape, size and manageability.

The circumstances under which any load is carried are also important in assessing the level of hazard.

The load should be of such a weight that a person required to carry it could reasonably be expected to handle in those particular circumstances. The Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) recommends the Manual Handling Assessment Chart (MAC), which can be used to help identify high-risk tasks.

The MAC does not comprise a full risk assessment, as some elements, such as the factors relating to the individual doing the lifting and carrying, are not covered.

4. The working environment

An assessment should be made of the following:

- a) the extent to which the surface across which items are to be moved is even and in good repair;
- b) whether any obstacles are present en route;

- c) potential hazards (e.g. crowded corridors, heavy fire doors, slippery and/or wet surfaces and stairways);
- d) lighting;
- e) the distance over which loads are to be carried; and
- f) the frequency of the need to move the item(s).

Handling people

From time to time, emergency situations such as accidents or an injury may make it necessary to assist others. In these circumstances, it is advisable to have a second person present.

On such occasions, it is good practice that movement is kept only to that needed to ensure survival.

Work-related injury

All work-related injury or sickness and all accidents in the workplace must be reported and logged in the accident book.

Regular health and safety inspections and risk assessments will help to reduce risk.

Advice and support

Where an NASUWT member suffers any injury, they should telephone the NASUWT free Legal Advice Line 0808 100 2221.

For additional advice and support, contact your NASUWT Local Association or Northern Ireland Centre.

Contact details can be found:

- on the NASUWT website at www.nasuwt.org.uk;
- in the NASUWT diary; or
- by phoning 028 9078 4480.

Further information

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 available at www.legislation.gov.uk.

Health and Safety Executive NI (HSENI) – *Protect your Profit: health and safety pays*.

Advice is available from HSENI at www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/manual-handling.