**Manual Handling**

University employees are involved in manual handling and lifting operations too numerous to list. Laboratory workers lift and handle dangerous substances and heavy and awkward items like gas cylinders. Anyone involved in receiving deliveries in the department is likely to handle boxes, parcels and packages of different shapes, sizes and weights. Secretarial and administrative staffs are likely to undertake similar work.

Manual handling operations involving the risk of injury should be avoided so far as is reasonably practicable. Avoidance of manual handling operations usually takes the form of redesigning the tasks or providing mechanical assistance. Further information is available in University Policy Statement S7/99.

Manual handling operations that cannot be avoided must be risk assessed before the work commences. A number of manual handling assessors have been appointed within the Department of Physics; contact Head of Building Services who will arrange to undertake such risk assessments. Members of Building Services and Workshop staff have completed manual handling training and their expertise should be called upon for the movement of heavy or bulky items.

The assessment should consider the following factors:

The task

- How is the load to be manipulated?
- Posture (avoid twisting whilst lifting)
- Is stooping involved?
- The distance the load is to be moved.
- The number of similar tasks to be carried out.
- How many people are involved?

The load

- Heavy?
- Bulky or unwieldy?
- Unstable?
- Sharp or difficult to grasp?

The environment

- Amount of space around the operation.
- Type of floor or work surface.
- Lighting etc.

Individual capability

- Strength of person.
- Man or woman and age.
- Existing health problems of the employee.

The assessment should also decide how best to reduce the risk of injury. A typical list of measures to consider is:

- Eliminate the task
- Automate the task
- Use mechanical lifting aids
- Share the load

- Reduce the weight of individual items
- Make the load easier to manage or grasp etc.
- Improve the layout of the manual handling task
- More efficient use of the human body to lift the load
- Remove any constraints on space
- Improve conditions of floors etc.

The list is not exhaustive but is meant to provide guidance.

All members of the department whose work may involve regular manual handling must attend a manual handling course provided by the University Safety Office:
https://safety.admin.ox.ac.uk/training-a-z