

NATIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE PREVENTION OF MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS FROM PERFORMING MANUAL TASKS AT WORK

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3.7 Managing Risk

What information is needed so that risk can be managed effectively?

In order to make informed decisions about the risks involved and how to manage them, it is important that duty holders understand the: intended use(s) of their product

- > Handling of (or associated with) the product
- > Potential risks the product may pose to workers performing manual tasks, and
- > Options for eliminating or controlling those risks
- > The most effective method of obtaining this information is by consulting with users

If your product has not been directly commissioned you may need to consult with a variety of users to obtain information about each of the possible uses involving manual tasks you have identified. This could be done through focus groups, equipment trials or through customer feedback channels.

You may want to seek the advice of an ergonomist or other OHS specialist. Accessing recent research in libraries may also be useful. You can also look for records of trials of similar products. Injury data collected by OHS authorities may also be of assistance.

What does risk management involve?

Undertaking a risk management process will enable you to eliminate MSD hazards or minimise the risk. The purpose of risk management is to systematically identify all reasonably foreseeable MSD hazards and understand the nature of the risks they may pose so you can make informed decisions about what you need to do to protect future users and workers from MSD. You must put risk control measures in place and monitor them to ensure they are effective.

The recommended risk management process involves:

1. Identifying all foreseeable MSD hazards as early as possible. This includes: understanding the purpose(s) of your product and the environments and systems of work which may be reasonably expected to be associated with the use of the product during the performance of manual tasks identifying MSD hazards that the product may present to all those who you expect to use or interact with the product while performing manual tasks identifying risks of MSD that may arise from the range of environments in which the product is likely to be used making yourself aware of the current knowledge on risks of MSD, and consulting with potential users of your product or with users of products intended for a similar purpose. Talking to experts about your type of product may also be of help.
2. Assessing the risk of MSD for all possible users of the product who perform manual tasks. This includes: considering which users might be harmed and how this might arise identifying and understanding the risk factors involved.

3. Deciding on the methods to eliminate the MSD hazard or control the risk. This includes: looking for ways to eliminate the hazard altogether at the design, manufacture, construction or supply stage, and if the hazard cannot be eliminated, researching ways to best minimise the risk associated with the hazard.
4. Implementing your plan to control the risks. This includes: implementing, as far as is reasonably practicable, the most effective risk control option as soon as possible. If it is not reasonably practicable to do this immediately, determine what steps can be taken straight away to reduce the risk and implement interim risk control measures, and testing the effectiveness of the risk control measures for each possible use of the product. Virtual testing, user trials and mock ups in consultation with users are recommended.
5. Monitoring and reviewing. This includes: monitoring the effectiveness of controls in the workplace for each potential use by seeking feedback from users and improving your measures to control risk of MSD in response to feedback.
6. Maintaining records of the MSD risk assessment and the steps taken to eliminate or minimise the risks. This includes: documenting the risk assessment so that users can be advised of residual risks developing information about the conditions and work practices required for safe use of the product, and recording any information on problems, hazards or risks identified in later use, and the result of decisions taken to deal with these difficulties, hazards and risks.

More information about the process of risk management at the design stage can be found in the publication *Guidance on the Principles of Safe Design for Work* available at www.ascc.gov.au.