

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK  
REGULATION, COMPLIANCE & BEST PRACTICE  
FACT SHEET



## FACT SHEET 2

### The Manual Handling Assessment Chart Tool (MAC)

The most common cause of occupational ill health in the UK is musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD). About 1.1 million people are affected each year with a cost to society of £5.7billion. MSD primarily affects muscles, joints, ligaments and tendons.

#### The Law

In 1992 the UK introduced the Manual Handling Operations Regulations in response to a European Community Directive to reduce Manual Handling injuries, which are a major cause of MSD. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 define manual handling as the 'transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, throwing or dropping) by hand or bodily force'.

The MHOR 1992 establish a clear hierarchy of measures for dealing with risks associated with manual handling, these are:

- Avoid hazardous manual handling so far as is reasonably practicable
- Assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided
- Reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable

A detailed assessment of every manual handling activity could be a major task and involve wasted time and effort. For example the handling of a light parcel on an occasional basis will involve negligible handling risk. However, the most common cause of injury is cumulative strain and to repeat the task frequently using poor technique may lead to injury.

**MAC** has been developed by the Health & Safety Executive to help employers identify high risk workplace manual handling tasks. MAC can be used to assess risks associated with lifting, carrying and handling in teams (where personal capability is reduced by about one third).

How MAC works.

It uses a combination of colour coding 'traffic light' approach as well as scoring. MAC considers three types of operations:

- Single lifting operation
- Single carrying operation
- Team handling operation

The flow chart guides the assessor through each element of the operation enabling the assessor to grade the level of risk. The MAC process not only considers the task but the number of times it is performed.

There is a website [www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac/introduction.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac/introduction.htm) which guides users through the use of the tool. You can download the MAC and then use it to assess six manual handling videos provided on the website.

You can then compare your findings with those of the HSE and read guidance on risk reduction measures, which may include: automation or mechanisation of the load handling, manual handling training of staff or redesigning the task.

The video case studies are varied and applications can easily be transferred to any industry.