WHAT IS THE LAW?


THE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS ARE SET OUT IN:
- Regulation 8 of the General Application Regulations requires employers to designate a competent employee or engage a competent person to assist them in safety and health protection. This includes training.

HANDLE WITH CARE

WHAT ARE THE MAXIMUM WEIGHTS TO BE LIFTED?
There are no longer any absolute weight limits – for the simple reason that there are too many other factors involved – these risk factors have already been covered.

GUIDELINE WEIGHTS
KEY RISK FACTORS ARE:
- excessive fatigue
- bad posture – cramped, restricted areas
- heavy loads
- repetitive bending or twisting
- frequent lifting

However, this diagram indicates guideline weights for lifting and lowering for an adult male (fit and healthy) in the best working conditions. For a female all weights should be reduced by one third.

TWISTING
If a lifting task includes twisting there is a considerable increase in the chance of injury.

FREQUENT LIFTING OR LOWERING
These guideline weights assume up to 30 leisurely operations an hour – where the pace of work is not forced, there are adequate pauses to rest and the load is not held for any length of time.

The weights must be reduced if the operation is repeated more frequently
- by 30% if repeated once or twice per minute
- by 50% if repeated five to eight times per minute
- by 80% if repeated more than twelve times per minute

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

Employers have to seriously look for ways of eliminating manual handling in all cases.

PROVISION OF MECHANICAL AIDS
Wherever practical they must be provided – they can be as simple as a sack trolley. Any necessary training in their use must be provided.