



Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee (QNJAC)

Occupational Health

Information Sheet 5

November 2011

Musculo-Skeletal Disorders

Approved by the Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee (QNJAC)
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Occupational Health Information Sheet No 5: Musculo-Skeletal Disorders

Legal Requirements:

Musculo-Skeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most common occupational illness in Great Britain, affecting a million people a year. They include problems such as back pain, joint injuries and repetitive strain injuries of various sorts. These incidents cost society around £5.8 billion a year and account for over 9.3 million lost working days in 2009/10, mainly (75%) affecting the back, upper limbs and neck.

MSDs affect the muscles, joints, tendons and other parts of the musculoskeletal system.

Legal requirements are contained primarily in:

- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Why should you read this guidance:

MSDs are rarely due to a one-off incident and normally build up over time.

The industry needs to:

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

The HSE have developed Manual Handling Assessment Charts (MAC Tool) to assist in the assessment process.

MSDs can be extremely disabling and can be difficult to identify and treat. This can result in long term sickness, which has to be covered by overtime by other employees or the use of contract staff both of which can introduce other safety and health issues into the workplace.

MSDs have clear links with general life style factors of the individual and guidance for Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome or Whole Body Vibration is also relevant (*see Target Zero Occupational Health Information Sheet No 4 Vibration at Work*).

MSDs can be the cause for industrial injury claims made against the employer

MSDs are associated with maintenance activities, some operational processes such as handling of bagged materials and repetitive actions, and the use of display screen equipment, for example by office workers.

Paybacks/Benefits to the business:

- Effective risk management of the workforce regarding risks to their health
- Reduced likelihood of MSDs for the employee
- Improved performance from the workforce

- Less fatigue experienced by the workforce
- Prevention of repeat injuries
- Reduced absenteeism and cover by overtime or use of external labour
- Removes the risk of injury claims with a potential for reduction to employee liability insurance premiums

Guidance currently available:

The HSE Web site <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm> provides guidance, including advice on rehabilitation <http://www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence/index.htm>

The **Manual Handling Assessment Charts** (MAC) is a tool designed to help assess the most common risk factors in lifting and lowering, carrying and team handling operations. This can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac/>

The **Assessment of Repetitive Tasks** (ART) tool is designed to help assess tasks that require repetitive movement of the upper limbs (arms and hands). It assists in assessing some of the common risk factors in repetitive work that contribute to the development of upper Limb Disorders (ULDs) This can be found at : <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/uld/art/index.htm>

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has published a Good Practice booklet on preventing work-related MSDs, downloadable from <http://osha.europe.eu/publications/reports/TE7606536ENC>

TILE

As well as using the MAC tool it is also worth considering the use of **TILE:**

Task: what is to be done, is it repetitive, does it require carrying for a distance.

Individuals have different capabilities, there are particular risks when undertaking a task for the first time, for example by temporary staff and when team lifting.

Load: what is its weight, size, shape and centre of gravity

Environment: is it cold, hot, is the area cluttered or clear of hazards etc.

Remember pulling and pushing as well as lifting

Useful contacts:

HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

Safequarry Website: <http://www.Safequarry.com>

MPA Website: <http://www.mineralproducts.org>

Good practice currently available:

Make good use of handling aids:

- Forklift trucks, telehandlers, powered trolleys, adjustable height devices
- Non-powered trolley aids

- Conveyors, rollers
- Electric hoists, travelling hoists
- Training
- Promotion of a healthy lifestyle for the workforce

Health Monitoring

Health monitoring is an informal and voluntary way of surveying workers for ill health symptoms. The law does not require health surveillance/monitoring for workers exposed to MSD risks because there are no valid techniques for early detection of MSD injuries. However, it can help action to be taken, for example to prevent or take early action for back pain or prevent work activities aggravating a condition. Further information can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/backpain/employers/monitoring.htm>

Training/Toolbox talks:

Employees and contractors will need to be:

- Informed of the tasks and activities that present a risk from manual handling and the precautions necessary to avoid injury
- Specifically trained for the manual handling tasks & equipment to be used
- Informed of the outcomes of risk assessments completed
- Provided with information on routine health monitoring undertaken and the results from this for them as an individual.

Key Performance indicators to consider:

- Have all manual handling activities on site been identified and assessed?
- Have actions been taken to eliminate or reduce the requirements for manual handling?
- Percentage of “at risk” population trained appropriately for the specific manual handling tasks undertaken.

This Information Sheet has been developed by the Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee (QNJAC) in conjunction with the MPA Occupational Health Working Group to help quarry operators, contractors, managers and others learn how to make health and safety improvements in the quarry industry. This guidance represents good practice which may go further than the minimum you need to do to comply with the law

It has been approved by the Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee (v1: 02.11.2011)