



Risk of personnel injury by incorrect manual handling



This Risk Alert has been written by Taslim Imad of the Loss Prevention Team

Background

In light of a number of recent back injury claims arising from incorrect manual handling incidents, including the manual handling of mooring ropes, the Club would like to remind Members and their crews of the risks posed through a failure to adopt appropriate manual handling techniques.

This Risk Alert is intended to highlight key factors for consideration when undertaking manual handling activities on board vessels.

Possible Causes

Manual handling operations are a common activity on board any size and type of vessel, the risks of which can be compounded as the ships are often moving. There is a potential for injuries to crew members if proper training, risk assessments and correct manual handling procedures are not adopted.

It is also common to have repetitive work routines and similar type daily work activities on any type and size of vessel, such as the manual handling of mooring lines, this could result in crew members becoming complacent when going about their daily on-board activities.

Other possible causes could also be, repetition of high force work activities, incorrect posture when manual handling, exposure of the body to vibration and handling of loads that are unstable, unbalanced or difficult to hold.



Preventive Actions

There are some basic small and simple steps required before manual handling is undertaken, and their implementation is required in order to avoid and reduce the risk of personal injuries resulting from incorrect manual handling techniques –

- Avoid manual handling as far as practicable, utilise available lifting appliances and equipment;
- A full risk Assessment, toolbox meeting and proper planning should be carried out prior to any manual handling operation;
- A work plan to include the characteristics of the load (Weight, centre of gravity, heavier side, shape, size etc), physical effort, duration and a team assessment to ensure personnel are adequately trained and fit for the job planned;
- Personnel to understand, appreciate and respect their own capabilities and manual handling limitations;
- Adequate supervision where appropriate;
- Effective communication between all crew members before and during the operation;
- Consideration of the working environment including:
 - ship movement;
 - confined space;
 - location such as height, proximity to hot/cold surfaces, ship-side, sharp edges, physical obstacles such as steps or gangways, slippery decks etc;
 - high or low ambient temperature; and
 - prevailing weather conditions.
- Clothing/PPE appropriate to the prevailing conditions to be worn.
- Training to be provided, pre-employment or prior to undertaking manual handling activities
- Refresher training to be undertaken at regular intervals.



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Documentation & Reporting of Incidents

- Detailed procedures with associated risk assessment
- Correct initial reporting of incidents to all relevant and concerned parties
- Full and detailed incident investigation to be undertaken (Root cause identification is an important tool in prevention of future incidents)
- Follow up reporting with updates and photographs where appropriate
- Log book entry – accuracy of record keeping
- Notification to vessel owners / operators
- Notification to Club's local correspondents as appropriate and in accordance with Company procedures

The above guidance supplements other widely available industry guidance which is not addressed in this risk alert.

Suggested References

- Risk alerts from the club -
 - o [RA08](#) – Safe Mooring Practice
 - o [RA29](#) – The Risks of Inadequate Crew [Pre-Employment Medical Examinations \(PEME\)](#)