



## Where Do Manual Task Injuries Come From?

All workplace and out-of-work activities involve using the body. Some of those manual tasks are hazardous and may cause injuries such as the examples listed on page 5 of the *Hazardous Manual Tasks* Code of Practice;

- *“sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments and tendons*
- *back injuries, including damage to the muscles, tendons, ligaments, spinal discs, nerves, joints and bones*
- *joint and bone injuries or degeneration, including injuries to the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, ankle, hands and feet*
- *nerve injuries or compression, for example carpal tunnel syndrome*
- *muscular and vascular disorders as a result of hand–arm vibration*
- *soft tissue injuries including hernias, and*
- *chronic pain.”*

These injuries are known as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). *“These are the most common workplace injuries across Australia.”*

### How Do MSD Injuries Happen?

The *Hazardous Manual Tasks* Code of Practice tells us an MSD can occur in two ways:

- *“gradual wear and tear to joints, ligaments, muscles and inter-vertebral discs caused by repeated or continuous use of the same body parts, including static body positions, or*
- *sudden damage caused by strenuous activity, or unexpected movements such as when loads being handled move or change position suddenly.*

*Injuries can also occur due to a combination of the above mechanisms.”*

### What Makes a Manual Task Hazardous?

The gradual wear and tear or sudden damage to a worker’s musculoskeletal system comes about because one or more hazards are a part of the manual task that the worker performs.

As explained in the *Hazardous Manual Tasks* Code of Practice:

*“A hazardous manual task is a task requiring a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing involving one or more of the following:*

- *repetitive or sustained force*
- *high or sudden force*
- *repetitive movement*
- *sustained or awkward posture, or*
- *exposure to vibration.*

*These hazards directly stress the body and can lead to an injury.”*

## Two Important Facts

1. Some of your workers may be doing hazardous manual tasks at home or in other out-of-work activities that results in “gradual wear and tear” or “sudden damage” to their musculoskeletal system. That out-of-work-hours damage may lead to, or precipitate an injury and a workers compensation claim at work when the worker is engaged in a hazardous manual task at work.
2. The reverse is also true. Workers may suffer a musculoskeletal injury while doing a hazardous manual task out-of-work because it was precipitated by the “gradual wear and tear” or “sudden damage” resulting from hazardous manual tasks they carry out at work.

Whatever training you deliver to workers about manual tasks it should also be aimed at workers gaining the reality, understanding, and motivation to eliminate or control the risks of hazardous manual tasks at work and out-of-work.

Perhaps then, in time, MSDs may no longer be *“the most common workplace injuries across Australia”*.

### Note

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