

Act II Theatre Company  
MANUAL HANDLING POLICY

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Attachment 1: Rules for Safe Manual Handling

## Act II Theatre Company

### MANUAL HANDLING POLICY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Manual handling operations means any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or bodily force.

#### 2. LEGAL BACKGROUND

Manual handling Operations Regulations place a duty on every employer to reduce the risk of injury from all manual handling operations which cannot be avoided and to avoid hazardous manual handling as far as reasonably possible.

#### 3. TRAINING

All Act II Stage Team and Back Stage Team will have completed Manual Handling training through their daily occupation or will receive additional briefing, supervision and coaching during stage up/down and backstage activities.

The verbal briefings provided will include the theory of lifting and back care, risk assessment, practical lifting techniques, and the safe use of equipment.

#### 4. RISK ASSESSMENTS

The key to the regulations is the identification of hazardous handling operations and their assessments. Managers must address manual handling issues when performing risk assessments. The regulations require a suitable and sufficient assessment of all manual handling operations to reduce the risk of injury.

This can be done by increasing awareness, providing information and training, and by providing mechanical aids (hoists), or by redesigning the task to avoid manual handling.

The following checklist provides examples of the type of actions which may cause injury during manual handling and should be used to support the briefing of team members. These relate to the lifting task, the individual's capability, the load and the working environment.

- The distance between the load and the lifter's trunk.
  - This has a direct impact on the level of stress on the lower back. If the load is not kept close to the trunk, then regardless of the lifting technique used, there will be stress on the lower back.
- Twisting the trunk.
  - If the lift involves twisting the trunk, this will increase stress on the lower back.
- Stooping.
  - If the lift involves stooping, this can also cause stress to the lower back.
  - When the lifter stoops, the trunk is thrown forward and its weight is added to the load being lifted.

- Reaching upwards.
  - Reaching upwards puts additional stress on the arms and the back and the load becomes more difficult to control. This is a relevant safety consideration. The distance of the lift adds to the level of effort needed. It may also mean that the lifters grip has to be changed or adjusted during the lift. This could lead to an accident or injury.
- The carrying distance.
  - In general, if it is safe to lift and lower the load, then the distance of the carry is not a risk factor unless it is an excessive distance.
- Pushing and pulling.
  - Excessive pushing and pulling adds to the physical stress of the lift. It also creates the risk of a slipping accident.
- Sudden movement.
  - The combination of sudden movement and an unstable lift can be very dangerous.
- Frequency of lifts and rest periods
  - A relatively small lift carried out frequently can create as large a risk of injury as a one-off large lift. The more lifts that are carried out without rests and recovery periods, the more likely it is that there will be an accident or injury caused by fatigue.
- Weight
  - This is one factor, but not the sole factor, in the risk assessment.
- Shape
  - The shape of a load affects the way it is held, if it is bulky or unwieldy this will often add to the difficulty of the lift.
- Grip
  - Is extra grip strength required.
- Capability
  - The team member's capability must be considered. Does the job require unusual strength? Does it create a hazard for a pregnant team member or team member with a health problem? Is special information or training required to do the job safely? As a general rule, the risk of injury should be regarded as unacceptable if the lifting operations cannot be performed satisfactorily by most reasonably fit, healthy team members.
- Working Environment
  - The working environment is another important safety consideration.
- Space constraints

- The working environment may restrict staff from adopting a good posture when lifting. This means that risk of injury will be increased. Restricted headroom forces a stooping posture. Furniture, fixtures or other obstructions may increase the need of twisting or leaning. Constricted working areas and narrow gangways restrict movement and manoeuvrability.
- Floors
  - Slippery or uneven floors increase the likelihood of slips, trips and falls, they also hinder smooth movement and create additional unpredictability.
- Floor levels
  - Steps and steep slopes can increase the risk of injury because they add to the complexity of movement when lifting.
- Temperature
  - The risk of injury during lifting can also be increased by unsuitable temperature. A high temperature or too humid an atmosphere can cause fatigue. If the temperature is too low, this may impair dexterity.
- Lighting
  - Clear lighting is needed so that the lifter can see what he or she is doing and make proper judgments about distance and space.

## Appendix: Rules for Safe Manual Handling

1. Stop and think.
2. It is important to plan the lift. 'Where is the load being moved to? Are hoists or other lifting aids needed? Is someone else needed to help? Is there any obstruction in the way?'
3. Position the feet. A lift should be carried out with the feet apart. This gives a balanced and stable base for the lift. The leading leg should be as far forward as is comfortable.
4. Adopt a good posture. When lifting from a low level, the knees should be bent. However, the lift should not begin from a kneeling position. The lifter should avoid over flexing the knees. It is very important to keep the back straight. If necessary, the lifter can lean forward a little over the load, for a better grip. The shoulders should be level and facing the same direction as the hips.
5. Get a firm grip. The best position and the best type of grip depend on the circumstances of the lift and the individual's preference. There needs to be a firm grip.
6. Raise your head as you start to lift, lift using your leg muscles, use smooth movements. Tuck your arms in to avoid straining your neck or shoulder muscles.
7. Hold the load close to your body.
8. Don't block your view by carrying too large a load.
9. Move the feet. The lifter should not twist his or her trunk when turning to the side but should remember to move his or her feet instead.
10. In order to apply the above principles, you must:
  - Wear suitable clothing, loose comfortable garments and flat shoes.
  - Inform the Stage Team supervisor and/or the Back Stage Team Supervisors if there is any reason why you should not lift.
  - Be aware of your own fitness and capability to follow safe lifting procedures.

Act II Theatre Company recognises its responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its members so as far as reasonably practical.

It is the policy of Act II Theatre Company to conform to the requirements of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations.

To this end Act II Theatre Company aims:

1. To avoid manual handling operations which are a risk to its members as far as reasonably practical.
2. Assess all operations involving manual handling procedures judged to be potentially hazardous and reduce the risk to the lowest level which is reasonably practical.
3. To provide all members involved in manual handling of stage equipment with refresher briefings covering all the key elements for safe handling processes.

### The First 3 Principles of Good Manual Handling

Remember to follow the first three principles of good manual handling to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on your spine.

- Keep your spine in line.
- Create a stable base.
- Keep any load close to your body.

### Clothing

- Wear comfortable clothes and flat heels.

### Individual Capabilities

- If you feel you are being put at risk, you must speak to someone about it before you injure yourself. It may be possible to reorganise the task to suit you. It is your responsibility to look after your back.

### Equipment

- Any lifting equipment must be handled by trained team members.

### Time

- Remember it is important to take your time and think before any handling task to ensure the safest way to do it. If you are in any doubt, stop and seek advice from trained staff.