

# Tree trimming/arboricultural industry

## Manual handling

### What are manual tasks?

Manual tasks are those activities that involve the use of force to move, hold, carry or throw an object. They can cause injury if they involve:

- high force (e.g. lifting a heavy tree trunk portions)
- awkward postures (e.g. reaching above and to the side of shoulder height)
- static postures (e.g. sitting or standing in one position for long periods)
- performing a movement repeatedly (e.g. continuously feeding timber into chipper, chainsaw operation for full shift).

### How do manual tasks cause injury?

Manual tasks can cause injury immediately (e.g. lifting something heavy or awkward and injuring your back) or over time through gradual wear and tear on your body (e.g. damaging your shoulder from repetitive movements over a long period).

Manual tasks can lead to:

- sprains and strains of muscles
- injuries to muscles, discs and ligaments in the back
- injuries to nerves, ligaments and tendons in joints (e.g. wrist, shoulder, knee).

While some people are at higher risk of suffering these types of injuries, **anyone** performing manual tasks can be injured.

### What can be done to reduce the harmful effects of manual tasks?

To decrease the likelihood of injuries from manual tasks, wherever possible the harmful task should be eliminated completely. This is not always possible though, so changes need to be made to the task to reduce the risk of injury.

Where a lot of **force** is involved:

- reduce the weight of the item being moved (eg, cutting the timber into smaller, more manageable pieces especially if lifting and 'throwing' them into the chipper)
- minimise the need to 'throw' items into either the chipper or trucks
- provide mechanical aids for moving heavy items (eg, use excavator, backhoe or winch to move large tree trunks which can not be cut into smaller moveable pieces)
- ensure that equipment used for cutting is sharp as this will dramatically reduce the force required to be exerted to make the cut

- where equipment is required to be unloaded from a truck bed, ensure that it is easily managed and/or able to be 'driven'/rolled on and off the truck (eg, use hydraulic platforms/ramps to lower heavy items to the ground)
- reduce the amount of time each person spends performing forceful tasks (such as chainsaw operation for lengthy periods)
- rotate people between tasks requiring significant forces and 'lighter' tasks
- team lifting is not the best way to lift and move heavy items and should only be used where all people involved have been adequately trained in team lifting techniques.

Where **awkward or static postures** are involved:

- where possible, adjust the height of the work to minimise the bending and twisting required
- ensure that workers are not working for extended periods with arms above shoulder height, especially when carrying/suspending weights (such as a chainsaw)
- provide elevating work platforms whenever possible, as this provides a stable work platform and somewhere to rest equipment when not in use
- encourage workers to take short breaks and organise work so that people have to move around a little.

Where **repetitive movements** are involved:

- use machines to perform the task when possible
- rotate people between repetitive and non-repetitive tasks
- train all employees in all the tasks that they do to make sure that they are doing them in the safest and most efficient way.

For more information on manual tasks and other workplace health and safety issues call 1300 369 915 or visit [www.deir.qld.gov.au](http://www.deir.qld.gov.au)

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