

The National Archives Of Scotland



Health & Safety Handbook

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What this handbook is about

This booklet gives essential health and safety information for everyone working in, or visiting buildings of, The National Archives of Scotland (NAS). It also contains health and safety guidance for NAS staff when they are working away from base.

The information in the booklet is easy to understand. If you need more detailed information, you should consult the NAS Health and Safety Policy, or the Risk Assessment records held in your department. If in doubt contact the Health and Safety Representative in your department. Please do not take a risk - be safe rather than sorry.

This handbook was produced and printed in August 2002. Please check with your Safety Representative that the information has not been superseded or updated since publication.

Safety policy

The National Archives of Scotland general policy statement applies within the National Archives of Scotland and runs parallel to the overall Scottish Executive policy statement.

This statement and that of the Scottish Executive is issued in accordance with Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (as amended). The Act requires employers to prepare a written statement of their general policy, organisation and arrangements for health, safety and welfare at work. They must keep the statement up to date and bring it to the notice of their employees.

This Act, together with the respective regulations made under the Act, applies to the Crown as they apply to other organisations. Although the legal and administrative procedures do not provide for enforcement and prosecution of the Crown for contravention, individuals employed by Crown organisations may be prosecuted in certain cases. Special procedures exist, whereby the Health and Safety Executive can issue Crown prohibition notices in cases where serious dangers must be acted upon.

The National Archives of Scotland intends to fully comply in all respects with all legal requirements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees and others, in particular members of the public who visit their buildings and who may be affected by its activities, acts or omissions. The National Archives of Scotland policy is embodied in the following objectives:

1. To set and maintain appropriate standards for health and safety as they relate to employees, visitors, contractors, members of the public and anyone else who may be affected.

2. To maintain these standards by following statutory requirements, establish National Archives of Scotland procedures and, where and when appropriate, to review and update these practices.

3. To ensure that all employees and others affected by our activities are informed of these standards by effective communication, instruction, supervision and training where appropriate.

4. To ensure that all National Archives of Scotland employees are informed of the responsibilities and discharge them with reasonable care.

5. To provide appropriate training where necessary to enable employees to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.

6. To encourage employees to actively participate in accident and incident prevention and to promote effective joint consultation in health and safety matters, normally through the Health and Safety Committee.

7. To co-operate with the appropriate local and national authorities in matters relating to Health and Safety of the National Archives of Scotland employees and, where reasonably practical, of others who may be affected by the National Archives of Scotland.

Asbestos Policy

In reports issued to us from Property Holdings asbestos was identified at West Register House. Our policy in dealing with existing asbestos is in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive Recommendation and is as follows.

1. The known asbestos material is to be surveyed annually by a professionally qualified building surveyor or other competent person noting the condition of the asbestos and providing recommendations on the action that should be taken should any of the asbestos be found to be damaged.
2. Our policy is not to remove the asbestos unless it directly affects or is associated with any refurbishment work or is assessed to be vulnerable to damage by building users or maintenance staff.
3. Any asbestos found to be damaged must be reported by staff to the building manager who will immediately close the area and request air tests and samples to be taken to a competent asbestos laboratory. The results of these investigations will be published to staff. Recommendations for repair or removal will be given the highest priority to ensure risks to the operational activities of the National Archives are minimised.
4. When asbestos is being removed it will be carried out in accordance with the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 and the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983. On completion of the work and independent analyst will carry out the required clearance test procedures in accordance with MDHS 39/3.

Working with computers

People working at computers for prolonged periods can suffer from:

- tired eyes.
- headaches.

- aches and pains in hands, wrists and arms.
- aches and pains in the neck, shoulder and back.

These problems can be avoided by:

- good workstation and job design.
- using your computer sensibly.



Workstation design

1. Ensure that you are comfortable. Adjust your chair and computer screen to find the most comfortable position. Your forearms should be horizontal and your eyes at the same height as the top of your computer screen.
2. Make sure you've got enough space on the desk around the computer.
3. Use a document holder if this avoids awkward head and eye movements.
4. Arrange your desk and computer screen to avoid glare, or bright reflections on the screen.
5. Ensure you've enough space under your desk to allow free leg movement. Use a footrest if necessary.

Keyboard and mouse

1. Get a comfortable keying position. Always leave a space in front of the keyboard to rest your hands and wrists when not typing.
2. Use a soft touch on the keys and don't overstretch your fingers.
3. Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with the wrist straight. Don't grip the mouse too tightly. Rest your fingers lightly on the buttons and don't press them hard.

Reading the screen

1. Adjust the brightness and contrast controls to your liking.
2. Keep the screen surface clean.
3. Adjust the text and background colours to your preference; ensure characters are focussed and don't flicker.



Posture

1. Don't sit in the same position for long periods. Exercise your hands, wrists, fingers, neck and shoulders while you sit.
2. Avoid stretching too often to reach things you need - rearrange your workstation!

Breaks

1. Take advantages of natural breaks to get away from your workstation. Vary your routine.
2. Take a short break at least every hour when you've got a lot of computer work to do.

Assessment Of Manual Handling

- The assessment of Manual Handling is only a method of assuring that such tasks are approached in a safe manner
- The assessment may be done in a formal written format if that task is a regular part of the work and does pose a risk to you or your fellow workmates
- This type of assessment must be done by a 'competent' person who has knowledge of the task, the working conditions and is aware of all the dangers. Ask at work if anybody has done a formal manual handling assessment.
- Or, it may be done in a less formal way, for example, looking at the load to be moved and making a sensible and informed assessment, then planning your actions as a result of the assessment.
- The best assessment can only guide you so, once trained, it is up to you to handle loads correctly.



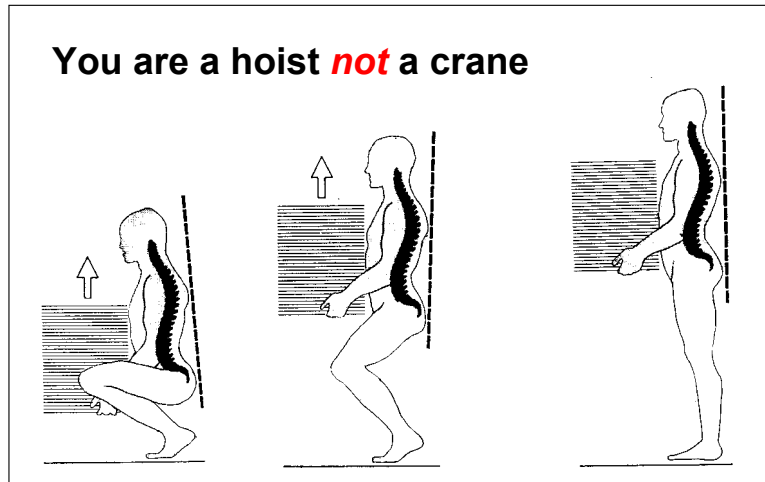
Manual Handling – Dos and Donts

Checklist	Yes	No
• Push rather than pull?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Use handling aids?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Take shortcuts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Plan and assess before lifting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Struggle and strain to lift a load?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Know your own physical abilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Act the fool when handling loads?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Take regular breaks, giving your body time to recover?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Work within safe limits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Suffer in silence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

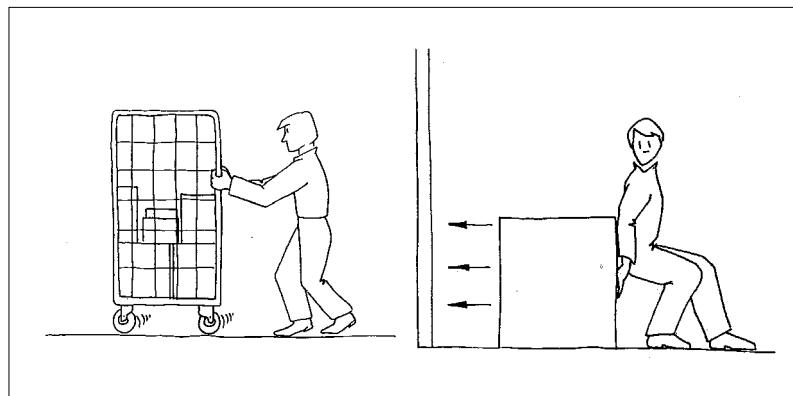
Manual handling checklist

Manual Handling Checklist	Yes	No	Action Required
<p><i>The task – does it involve:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twisting? • Holding the load away from the body? • Carrying a long distance? • Moving up and down different levels? • Is the work rate imposed by the rate of production? • Is it repetitive handling <p><i>The load – is it:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy? • Bulky/unwieldy • Difficult to grasp? • Unstable? • Harmful to grasp? (e.g. sharp edges, hot) <p><i>The working environment – are there:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor floors? • Tripping hazards? • Poor lighting • Different levels? • Hot/Cold/Humid? 			

Correct lifting method

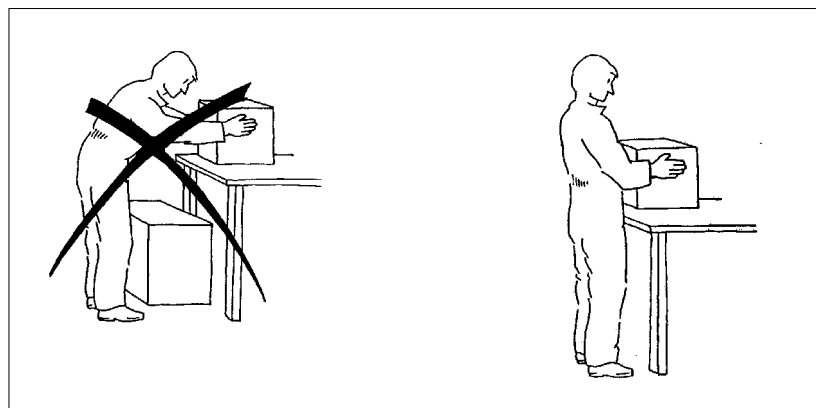


- Use strong leg and thigh muscles
- Maintain the natural shape of the spine throughout the lift

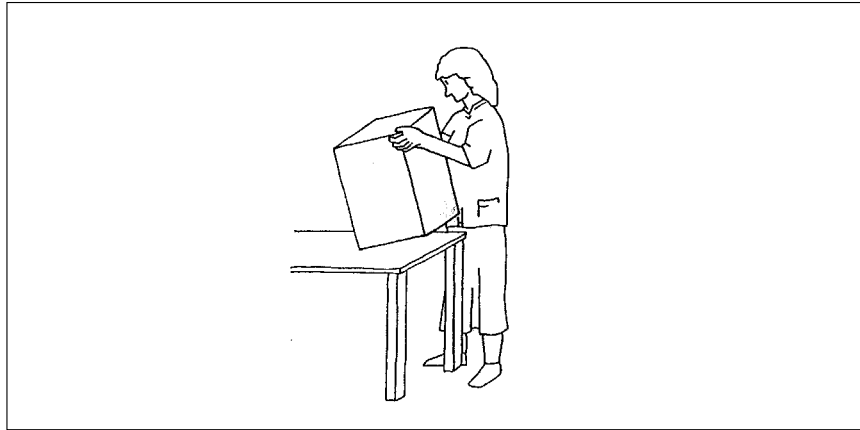


Hand position when pushing

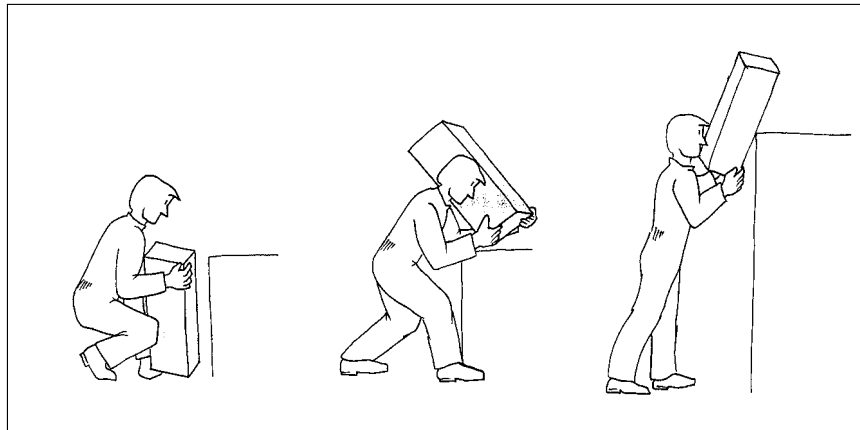
Using the strong leg muscles



Avoid an obstructed lift



Rocking a load to assess its weight



Use of a midway stage to change grip

Lifting, carrying and moving records

Things that can go wrong:

- you can pull a muscle by lifting a heavy or awkward-sized item.
- you can trap your fingers when moving or repositioning a bulky item.
- the trolley you're using can capsize if overloaded.
- you can become trapped by mobile shelving when retrieving or replacing records.

Remember the golden rules of manual handling:

- Look at the size of the load you're going to lift. If you've any doubts about your ability to lift it, get someone to help you.
- Bend your knees and keep your back straight when lifting and lowering.
- Make sure there are no obstructions in your path.
- Use protective gloves if the load has uneven or sharp edges.

Using trolleys

- Check the trolley before you use it. If it's defective, don't use it.
- Load the trolley sensibly. Distribute the load on large trolleys between the upper and lower shelves.
- Avoid using the lower shelves of small trolleys, to reduce the amount of bending users will need to do.
- Keep the trolley under control at all times.

Safety at mobile shelving

Mobile shelving is either mechanically or electrically operated. In either case, it needs someone to turn a wheel or press a switch to bring the shelving into motion.

The use of mobile shelving vastly reduces the space required for storing records, and is usually perfectly safe. However, staff working in larger record rooms can set shelving in motion whilst unaware that a colleague is retrieving or replacing a record. There is an obvious risk of trapping between the sets of shelves.

Sensible precautions are:

- For someone entering a record room: do a quick check to see if anyone is working in the room already.
- For someone working with records at a remote area of the room: use a kick stool or other safety device to prevent shelves closing completely.



Using ladders and steps

The ladders and steps used in NAS are inspected regularly for defects. Each ladder or set of steps is given a unique number and records of inspections and repairs kept in a log book.

Before using a ladder:

- check that it's in good condition.
- ensure that rubber feet are fitted correctly.
- position the ladder at the correct angle - 1 out to every 4 up.
- if you've any doubts about the angle or footing, get someone to put their foot against the bottom of the ladder to prevent it slipping.
- make sure the top of the ladder is stable or secured.

Before using a set of steps:

- check that it's in good condition.
- make sure the steps are locked in position.
- make sure that the steps are set on a firm, level base.

Don't:

- use a ladder that's too short.
- stand the ladder on a box or other unsteady base.
- overstretch from the ladder.
- carry items that need both hands when using a ladder or steps.



Working with chemicals

Working with chemicals involves taking suitable precautions during:

- storage.
- use.
- disposal.

Information on chemicals

Always check what the label on the chemical says. This should tell you what the chemical is, and any hazards linked to its use. The warning symbols you're likely to encounter are:



: Harmful



: Toxic



: Flammable

Read any instructions which come with the chemicals. If in doubt, refer to the hazard data sheet provided by the supplier.

Storage : key points

- Use the container provided by the supplier whenever possible. If you need to decant chemicals into a different container, this must be correctly labelled and identified.
- Store flammable liquids in a fire-proof store or cabinet.
- Store similar types of chemical together.

Using chemicals safely

- Check the hazard data sheet or the COSHH assessment to see what precautions you need to take.
- Use the minimum amount of chemical needed for the job you're doing.
- Avoid any skin contact with chemicals; wear gloves if necessary.
- Wear eye protection if there's any risk of splashing.
- Wear a mask if there's a risk of inhaling dust.
- Use ventilation hoods if they are provided.
- Clean up any spillages immediately, using the procedures recommended in the hazard data sheet.
- Dispose of solvent waste in the containers provided.



Using work equipment



Work equipment is literally any tool, appliance or machine used for work purposes. This will include everything from hand tools like scalpels or knives to complex photographic equipment.

Key rules for the safe use of work equipment are:

- always use tools that are suitable for the job.
- if in doubt about how to operate equipment – ask for help.
- always use the guards or other safety devices fitted to equipment.
- only people who are adequately trained should be allowed to use more dangerous equipment.
- avoid trailing power cords which could cause a tripping hazard.
- check the condition of electrical equipment regularly.



Working in plant rooms and other areas

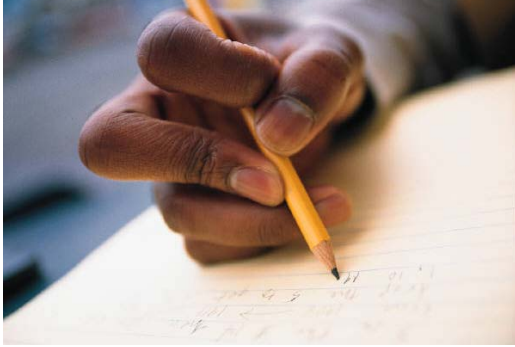
If you have to visit plant rooms in the course of your work, be aware that:

- some areas are restricted to 'authorised persons only'.
- special protective equipment - such as ear protectors - may be needed in some rooms.
- areas not frequented by most members of staff may contain tripping hazards or obstructions which can cause injury.
- some areas may be excessively warm and have limited ventilation facilities.



If you have to access the roof, for example to show a job to a contractor, take extreme care. Do not leave safe access areas. Don't be tempted to assist the contractor in doing his job - that's his responsibility.

Working away from base



Records and other archive material in private hands may be in poor condition. Be aware of problems with mould and dust, and wear a face mask if necessary. Avoid skin contamination by using disposable gloves.

Don't take any unnecessary risks when accessing privately-held archive material. If visiting a private dwelling alone, advise the office of your expected time of arrival and time of return.

If ladders or steps have to be used to access material, carry out a visual inspection before you use them.



Dealing with members of the public

If there is going to be a delay in retrieving a record, keep the person making the request informed of the reasons at an early stage. Some people get angry or frustrated by delays. Giving out information as accurately as possible can defuse such situations. Most people are reasonable if dealt with politely.



If you're having difficulty with a particular individual, tell your manager.

If you suspect someone of trying to remove a record from the building, tell your manager. Keep a close eye on the suspect so that you will be able to give a full description to the police. Where CCTV is in place, get the camera trained on the suspect to get a good video record.

Don't approach the suspect yourself. If your suspicions are right (or wrong!) he (or she) may react violently.

Emergencies

Fire

In the event of a Fire:

1. Operate the nearest fire alarm immediately;
2. If it is a small fire, which can be easily extinguished using the correct fire extinguisher and you have been trained in the operation of fire extinguishers, then attempt to put the fire out. If this proves to be unsuccessful, leave the building by the nearest exit and report to the assembly point.

Fire Action notices and plans of the building, showing the escape routes are located within the corridors of each building. Make yourself familiar with the Fire Action requirements and also the location of the assembly point.

Please ensure you obey the instructions of the Fire Marshall to vacate the building when asked to do so.

Accidents

Accidents can happen to staff or members of the public. Should you be involved in an accident in your workplace, and require first aid treatment, then call the NAS trained first aider who will provide assistance and advice.

You may be:

1. Treated by the NAS qualified first aider;
2. Taken home, with the proviso that you make an appointment with your doctor; or
3. Immediately sent to hospital.

Irrespective of how small the accident is, the details should be entered into the NAS Accident Book, contained in each of the buildings. These instructions apply to staff and

visitors. The names of NAS Qualified First Aiders are contained on the intranet and notice boards.

Ill-health

Should you become unwell at work, then call the NAS qualified first aider for assistance. A first aider will provide you with guidance as to the appropriate action that may be required.

This book belongs to:

Surname:

Forename:

Office/Department:

If found please return to the Personnel Department, National Archives of Scotland.

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