

Safer manual handling for steel fixers

Lifting, carrying or putting down objects in the wrong way can cause injury.

Steel fixers are a high-risk group for these injuries, called musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

These tips can help your employees work safely on site.

10 tips for manual handling



1. Plan ahead

Create a plan for the job to avoid double handling of materials and awkward access points. Where you can, reduce the size of the bars and manufacture cages in a controlled environment. Then lift them into place using a crane.



2. Identify manual handling tasks

Think about the best way to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury before starting these tasks. Minimise lifting, back bending, overreaching and holding a bar whilst tying. Use sliding techniques over lifting techniques.



3. Organise stacks for efficiency

Organise steel to be stacked near to where it will be used and in the most efficient order. For example, place bottom steel on top of the stack to avoid double handling.



4. Get work up off the ground

Where possible, get work and materials up off the ground. Choose a storage method that will minimise manual handling. For example, higher dunnage and trestles.



5. Choose smarter tools

After assessing the job, choose the most appropriate tools to minimise the risks. Use mechanical steel fixing tools to minimise back bending and repetitive twisting. For example, automatic bolt cutters and automatic tiers.



6. Use equipment and mechanical aids

Use equipment and mechanical aids, where you can. Make sure to use a crane or other lifting device to lift materials as close as possible to where they will be used.



7. Lift smarter

Set limits on what kinds of bars can be manually lifted. Use team lifting for heavy loads and large diameter bars if they have to be manually lifted. Ensure individuals lighten their loads and don't carry too many bars at one time.



8. Mix up your tasks

Try alternating tasks throughout the day to mix up physical positions if you can. Try to avoid being in awkward positions for too long. Job rotation throughout the day can help with this.



9. Take breaks and stretch

Regularly rest, stretch and straighten up if you're working in awkward positions.



10. Review and revise control strategies

Keep talking about manual handling risks and what you have to do to eliminate or reduce them. If an injury occurs, review and revise your control measures. This will help prevent it happening again.



More information about manual handling

worksafe.vic.gov.au/hazardous-manual-handling



worksafe.vic.gov.au/construction

