

# Safe manual handling

The Association processes personal injury claims every year that have resulted directly from poor manual handling techniques on board. Injuries include strains and sprains, fractures, skin wounds and hernias.

It is thus clearly important to exercise due care when moving items by hand. Not only is this less likely to result in injury, it will often make the job easier.

It is useful to ask the following questions before lifting heavy or awkward articles by hand.

- Does this load need to be moved or lifted?
- Is there equipment to help move it?
- Can other people help?
- Is there sufficient room and space to move it?
- Are clothing and footwear appropriate?
- How heavy is the load?
- Where is the centre of gravity?
- Is it secure?
- Are the edges safe?
- Is the surface safe to hold?

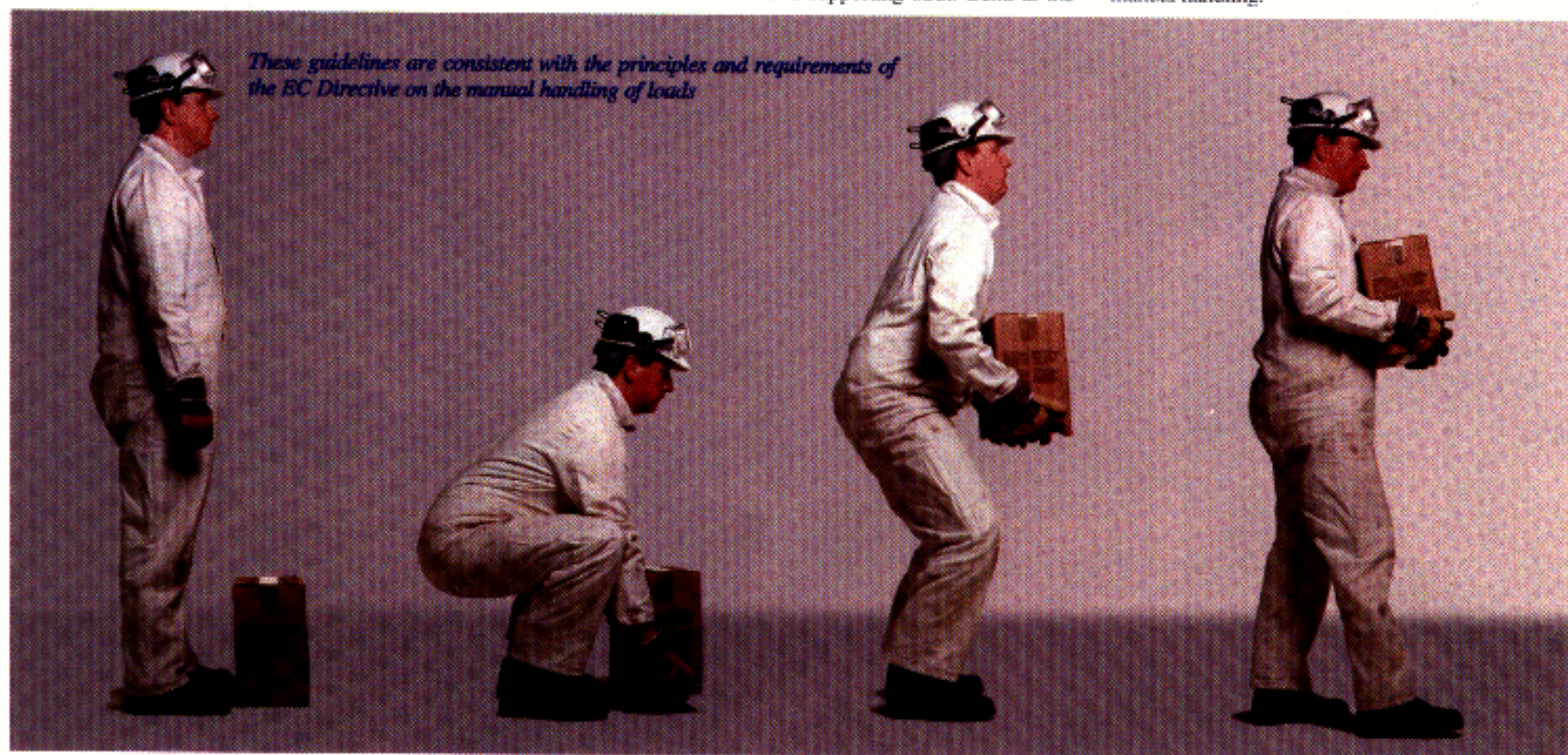
- Is it likely this load will obscure vision when being carried?
- The squat is generally considered to be the safest form of manual lift - (see diagram).
- Stand as close to the load as possible. Spread feet to create a base.
  - Bend knees and keep the back in a natural line. However don't bend knees fully, as this will leave less power to lift.
  - Grasp the load firmly.
  - Raise the head at the start of the lift.
  - Lift with the legs. Use the body's natural leverage, momentum, balance and timing for ease of action. Adjust feet as required.
  - Hold the load close to the centre of the body.
  - It is clearly not always possible to stand close to the object or bend knees when lifting the item. Stand as close as possible to such objects. If possible bend the knees, otherwise brace them against a solid object and, if it is helpful, use an arm as a supporting strut. Bend at the

hips, keeping the head and back in a straight line and lift gradually using legs, buttocks and stomach muscles.

## To help prevent injuries while carrying objects

- keep the load close to take advantage of the body's mechanical leverage
- keep arms tucked in in order to prevent injury or fatigue to the neck or shoulder muscles
- don't change the grip on the load unless its weight is supported
- avoid twisting the body whilst stooping, bending or leaning back - if a change of direction is required, move feet instead
- don't block vision by carrying too large a load.

Many of the above suggestions seem obvious and, when quickly moving a load from A to B, it may appear a waste of time to consider the task carefully and take appropriate action as outlined above. However, serious and permanent injuries can be sustained by not giving sufficient thought to safe manual handling.



*These guidelines are consistent with the principles and requirements of the EC Directive on the manual handling of loads*

## Curbing medical costs in Brazil

The Association's Brazilian correspondent William van Herp advises that despite the port of Paranaguá having no first class medical facilities, final invoices submitted for treating foreign crew members are usually extremely expensive.

This is apparently due to a local feeling that when the patient or his employer is foreign, they can

afford to pay higher medical fees and hospital rates.

Normally when an injured or ill crew member requires medical treatment in Brazil the vessel's agents arrange for the appropriate medical assistance, usually without requesting an estimate of costs. While this is perfectly understandable as clearly the priority is prompt medical treatment, it also creates the possibility of owners facing unreasonable medical fees without being able to challenge them as the treatment has by this time been completed.

It is important therefore that once the injured or ill crew member is delivered to medical care, the ship's agents should immediately start negotiating with the appropriate doctor or hospital regarding the cost being incurred.

Alternatively - or even in addition - they should request the assistance of local P&I correspondents. If the negotiations do not reach a satisfactory result then, when the condition of the patient permits, transfer to another hospital can be arranged.

Members aware of crew being discharged in Brazil due to illness or injury should advise the Association immediately so it can ensure the correct arrangements are made or, at least, advise agents to involve the Club correspondent.

## Stowaway alert - Colombia

Recently the Club has noticed a rise in the number of incidents involving Colombian stowaways being discovered on board Members' vessels.

Members are therefore requested to ensure that ships calling at Colombian ports in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are particularly vigilant, and take all necessary precautions to help prevent stowaways boarding.

