Manual Tasks associated with Relocation/ Refurbishment of Workplaces

1. Risk Management

The risk of sustaining musculoskeletal disorders to the back, upper and lower limbs when manually handling furniture and equipment during workplace relocation or refurbishment is dependant on a number of factors:

- size and weight of the object
- the heights at which the lift is carried out
- the distance of the object from the person
- the ease with which the object can be grasped
- the stability of the object
- the duration of handling
- the frequency of lifting
- the availability of appropriate mechanical assistance
- and the fitness and skill of those carrying out the manual handling tasks.

A risk management plan should be done for manual tasks associated with workplace relocation or refurbishment in accordance with the Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2000. The information in this guideline should be used to assist in the development of local risk management plans and for the planning of safe furniture and equipment movement.

2. Relocation or Refurbishment of Offices: Risk Management

Manual tasks associated with workplace relocations/refurbishments have been categorised according to the level of risk and the people who should perform them. The categories are as follows:

2.1 High risk tasks to be performed by external contractors* only:

Relocation of 1 or several offices and the associated movement of boardroom tables, workstation desks, filing cabinets, cupboards and bookcases and cartons of work items. Moving furniture and equipment up and down stairs.
The level of risk associated with the above manual handling tasks is high and it is the University’s policy that an external contractor experienced and equipped to safely perform the tasks be engaged.

*To arrange for an external contractor, University managers should email P&F’s Procurement Unit at furniture@pf.uq.edu.au

2.2 Moderate risk tasks to be performed by a combination of external contractors* &/or University staff:

Packing boxes associated with relocation or refurbishment – when there is a high volume of heavy items to be packed such as numerous computers in an office or computer laboratory or all equipment in a scientific laboratory, a combination of University staff and external contractors should be used.

Stacking boxes ready for pick up – an external contractor should be used to assist where there are a large number of packed boxes for example when relocating an entire laboratory.

Risk control measures such as packing smaller and lighter cartons, mechanical assistance, (trolleys,) appropriate scheduling of work tasks, suitable working heights, clear access and team lifting and supervision should be implemented.

Staff who have pre-existing musculoskeletal disorders or who have a sedentary lifestyle are most at risk of injury when manually handling furniture and equipment. In such cases, the use of an external contractor and mechanical assistance to assist in packing and moving is important.

*To arrange for an external contractor, University managers should email P&F’s Procurement Unit at furniture@pf.uq.edu.au

2.3 Lower risk tasks to be performed by University Staff:

Preparing for relocation (e.g. packing books into boxes on a desk top, removing individual files from filing cabinets and packing into boxes)

Moving chairs and other items on wheels across flat surfaces

Examples of risk control measures for lower risk tasks undertaken by University staff include:
- Designing the packing area so that packing is done on benches or desks in an upright posture.
- Reducing the size and weight of boxes being packed.
- Providing mechanical assistance such as trolleys with height adjustable beds and large pneumatic wheels for boxes or 2 wheeled trolleys for the movement of filing cabinets.
- Emptying book shelves or filing cabinets before moving them.
- Scheduling packing and movement of furniture and equipment so that rest breaks or task variation is provided.
- Training staff in manual tasks risk assessment and control
2.4 Risk Management Plan for all Workplace Refurbishment or Relocation Tasks

A risk assessment and control plan must be done for all workplace relocation or refurbishment activities with consideration of the level of risk and resourcing specified in this guideline and in accordance with the Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2000 (http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/law/codes/manualtasks/index.htm).

3. Delivery and assembly of new furniture

The P&F Furniture Couriers are responsible for delivering and assembling new furniture or dismantling old furniture for removal. All old furniture to be removed by the Furniture Couriers should be emptied before removal e.g. filing cabinets and books shelves. The Furniture Couriers are not responsible for rearranging furniture and equipment to suit individual preferences or for relocating offices.

To organise for the relocation of an office or rearrangement of furniture University managers should contact furniture@pf.uq.edu.au. The Furniture Procurement area will organise for this to be done by an external contractor.

4. Room set ups for exams, lecture theatres and tutorial rooms

P&F Building Services Officers are responsible for arranging the layout of furniture within a room either by doing it themselves or arranging for external contractors to do it.

To organise for this to occur University managers should contact furniture@pf.uq.edu.au. The furniture procurement area will organise the most suitable way for rooms set ups to be done in consultation with the University manager.

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