



Hazardous manual tasks

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Hazardous manual tasks are recognised as a major occupational safety and health risk for the Western Australian mining industry. A manual task can become hazardous when there is repetitive or sustained application of force, awkward posture, sustained vibration or handling of unstable or unbalanced loads. Injuries from performing hazardous manual tasks are collectively referred to as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). MSDs account for a third of all injuries for the WA mining industry.

This snapshot covers hazardous manual tasks that resulted in MSDs for the period from 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017.

For more information about occupational safety and health, visit our website www.dmirs.wa.gov.au

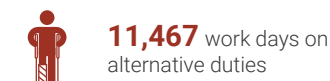
@DMIRS_WA

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

Injuries by employment type

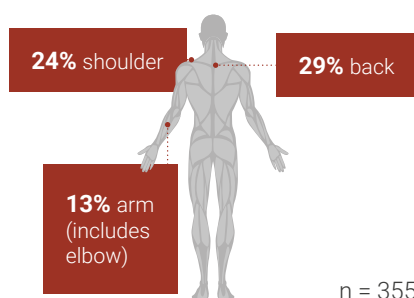


Injuries by days lost

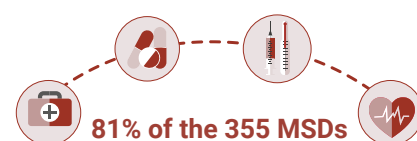


70% of MSDs resulted from **overexertion** associated with moving objects, pulling or pushing and lifting and carrying.

Top three body parts injured

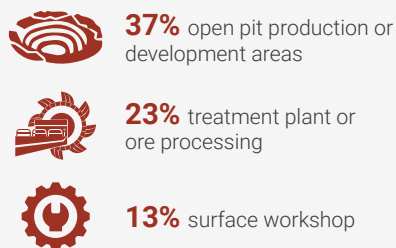


Injuries by severity



28% of the injuries were **lost time injuries**

Back injuries by top three locations



Heavy equipment workshops had the highest number of injuries at **11**

Back injuries by top three occupations



Haulage truck drivers and processing plant operators had the highest number of injuries at **17 each**

Shoulder injuries by top three location



Heavy equipment workshops had the highest number of injuries at **11**

Shoulder injuries by top three occupations



Processing plant operators had the highest number of injuries at **23**

Tackling hazardous manual tasks



Safe design

Identify and assess all risks

Use hazard identification and risk assessment methods early in the design process to eliminate or minimise the risk of injury from chronic wear and tear and large forces.

Examples of safe design

- Adjustable vehicle seating improves operator comfort and reduces jarring and jolting.
- Physical support and remote control for high vibration power tools, especially when working overhead.

Buy safe

Consult and consider MSD risks before purchasing new items. Where possible, workers using the items should be given an opportunity for trial and feedback.



Participative ergonomics

Participative ergonomics is the internationally recommended approach to reducing the overall risk from hazardous manual tasks and preventing MSDs.

Work teams, with their supervisors, are well-placed to identify their hazardous manual tasks and contribute to the risk assessment process. Based on the risk assessment, the team will consult with management, develop risk control options, plan their implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of the control measures.

Benefits

- Better identification of hazardous manual tasks, risk assessment and solutions because of the workers' relevant knowledge and hands-on experience.
- Worker ownership through the process results in increased support and understanding of control measures.



Before you start

The most effective way to manage a hazardous manual task is to determine what it is about a task that makes it hazardous then eliminate that task if possible before starting.

Simple questions to ask yourself

- Do I need to complete this task?
- Why is this task being done this way?
- Is there mechanical assistance I can use?
- Can I slide instead of lift?
- Can I push rather than pull?
- Do I have any muscular limitations?
- Is my posture and body positioning safe?
- Do I need help to complete this task?

The straw that broke the camel's back

MSDs are commonly a result of cumulative 'wear and tear' on the musculoskeletal system. Often a single event is reported to be the direct cause of a particular musculoskeletal disorder, whereas it may result from extended exposure to sub-critical stress or strain. To effectively manage manual task risks, consider the cumulative nature of MSDs.



National target

Safe Work Australia has set a reduction target of 30% from 2012 to 2022 for compensation claims of one week or more duration relating to MSDs. Here is how the Western Australian mining industry is progressing, using number of MSDs per 1,000 employees with one week or more off work or on alternative duties.

