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## LIGHTEN THE LOAD

This year for the "European Week for Safety and Health" reflects on manual handling.

The overall aim of the European campaign on musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) is to support employers, workers, safety representatives, practitioners, preventive services, policy makers and other stakeholders in improving MSD prevention at workplace level.

The Lighten the load campaign in 2007 seeks to promote an integrated management approach to tackle MSDs embracing prevention of MSDs, and the retention, rehabilitation and reintegration of workers who already suffer from MSDs by:

- Taking forward European action on MSDs initiated by the first European Week for Safety and Health at Work in 2000, "Turn your back on MSDs"
- Extending the scope of EW activities in terms of themes covered, and
- Involving all Member States and EFTA countries in the campaigning activities
- The integrated management approach to tackle MSDs includes three key elements that are important for its successful implementation:
- Employers, employees and government working together to tackle MSDs
- Addressing the whole load on the

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- body leading to MSDs, and  
Managing the retention, rehabilitation and return to work of those who suffer, or have suffered, MSDs

The campaign emphasises the concept of "managing the load". This does not only refer to the load being carried but also on all the "strains" being put onto the body by, for example, the material being moved, the environmental factors in which the work is being carried out, other hazards in the workplace, and the pace at which the task is done.

Normally there is not a single risk factor leading to the development of MSDs. For example, manual handling is not a single cause of back pain; there are many other risk factors contributing to its development including stress, cold and work organisation. Therefore, it is important to assess the full range of MSD risks and to address them in a comprehensive way.

In addition to the primary prevention of MSDs, the integrated management approach also covers secondary and tertiary prevention focused on the retention, rehabilitation and reintegration of workers who already suffer from MSDs. A special focus should be placed on multidisciplinary approaches where the prevention side is working with the rehabilitation side. Particularly important is the role of social and organisational support in enabling workers both to return to work and subsequently to sustain employment when experiencing MSDs.



*Logo used with acknowledgment to the European Campaign.*

Some ideas about how you can get involved in the Lighten the load campaign - from workplaces to boardrooms, from factories to farms, and how enterprises, trades unions and Occupational Safety & Health institutions can work together.

The ideas and actions are followed by examples of what individuals and organisations have done in previous European campaigns.

- Risk assessments
- DSE assessments
- Lifting and manual handling training
- Safety demonstrations and awareness programmes.
- Training events, seminars and workshops
- Poster competitions and quizzes
- Advertising and promotion campaigns
- Good neighbour schemes between large and small employers
- Suggestion schemes
- Hazard spotting
- Inspection days



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