

## LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

# REMOVAL & RELOCATION OF OFFICE FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT, BOOKS.

---

### **PURPOSE**

From time to time, there is a need to relocate office furniture, equipment and personal effects such as books and documents for purposes of staff relocation or minor works. At other times, staff may wish to rearrange their office furniture, equipment or personal effects. These guidelines are provided for staff, administrative managers and heads of schools and departments to minimize the risk of injury to staff arising from these tasks.

These guidelines are not meant to prevent staff from occasional rearrangement of office furniture, equipment and effects. The guidelines are meant only to provide guidance with assessing the task and obtaining help when required.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGERS, HEADS OF SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS**

Staff should not be asked to remove or relocate office furniture, equipment or books unless the task has been assessed and deemed to be safe. See guidelines for assessing tasks below.

Any projects which require removal or relocation of office furniture, equipment or books should include provision in the budget for outside contractors to remove or relocate items and to replace them at the conclusion of the project. The budget should also include provision for professional cleaning services if necessary.

### **Staff members**

Staff members should not move office furniture, equipment or books unless they have assessed the task and are confident that they can safely perform the task. If a staff member is not confident that he or she can safely perform the task, he or she should seek assistance.

### **Assessing the task**

It is not possible to provide strict, quantitative guidelines for tasks which are considered safe. Safety depends to some extent on the physical capacity and training of the individual performing the task.

The following self assessment questions can be used as a guide to assessing tasks:

- Do the individual performing the task have any musculoskeletal disorders which limit their capacity to perform manual handling tasks? (e.g. History of back pain)
- Does the task require application of large forces? (e.g. Heavy items such as heavy boxes, filing cabinets)
- Does the task require repetitive lifting? (e.g. Several boxes of books)
- Does the task involve sustained effort? (e.g. Carrying boxes some distance to another room)
- Does the task involve awkward lifting postures? (e.g. Reaching across a desk to lift a computer)
- Does the task involve moving unstable loads? (e.g. A filing cabinet in which the contents could shift or the drawers open)

If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes”, staff should seek assistance before attempting the task.

**Getting Assistance**

The OH&S office can assist with formal assessment of manual handling tasks if this is required.

Laboratory staff and technical staff should not be considered occasional removalists. It is not part of their job to help staff with relocation of office furniture and equipment.

If the task is small and the staff member believes that assistance is required, they should ask a colleague to assist them.

If the task is substantial, outside help should be engaged. There are two possibilities:

- Maintenance Request: Complete a maintenance request (including charge code) and Buildings and Grounds will list the job for completion by their staff. There are likely to be considerable delays. Request forms can be found at: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/bg/maint.html>
- Outside contractors: The University has arrangements with outside contractors. Contact Business services (x2104) to make arrangements. Turn around is likely to be much more rapid than for a maintenance request but it may also be more expensive.

**More Information**

The WorkSafe Victoria Manual Handling Code of Practise provides some guidance on assessment of tasks. The Code is available at:

<http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/vwa/publica.nsf/docsbyUNID/9E18A599B395EF8ECA257013002A62CB?Open>

The La Trobe University manual handling hazard identification checklist is available at:

[http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hr/forms/Manual\\_Handling\\_Hazard\\_Identification02.pdf](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hr/forms/Manual_Handling_Hazard_Identification02.pdf)

The OHS Section wishes to acknowledge the Health Sciences Zone OHS Committee for the development of this guideline.

Occupational Health and Safety Section

This Guideline was endorsed by the Executive OHS committee 5 March 2007.