

# Health & safety guidance for voluntary bat roost visitors: manual handling

## What about manual handling?

A roost visit might require you to lift or lower, carry, push or pull items. The most common item you might need to lift and carry is a ladder but you may need to move loads to create an access or exit route.

Manual handling any item can cause strains and musculoskeletal problems. These can be very serious and the damage long-lasting. There are also less significant risks such as bumps and abrasions from dropping loads or cuts and bruises from sharp objects.

When considering manual handling you should always first ask whether it is necessary. Do you really need to manual handle? You should avoid doing so wherever possible. If it is unavoidable you should follow the process below.

### Assess the risk – plan and prepare

Where manual handling cannot be completely avoided, then think about 'TILE' see page 2 .

### Perform

Before lifting anything think about doing some gentle stretching to warm up your muscles – especially if it is very cold as muscles are more prone to damage if cold. Follow the basic principles of lifting in table 1 overleaf .

### The risk of injury is increased by:

- sudden unexpected movements;
- awkward postures;

- static, fixed postures;
- extremes of joint movement;
- excessive forces;
- overuse.

### To avoid risk of injury:

- ask “do I have to do this?”;
- test objects first - know your limits;
- get stable before you move;
- concentrate on keeping your back in a natural line;
- make all movements smoothly;
- use your leg muscles to provide power and upper body to control the load;
- stop if things start to go wrong.

## Training

Training is not a substitute for a robust risk assessment of all the other TILE elements covered above as part of the overall risk assessment process. An unsafe manual handling activity cannot be made safe by training alone. However, training can be helpful in providing individuals with clarity on safe lifting principles which can be applied to any manual handling task.

Natural England is considering how we might provide on-line training on manual handling. Please regularly check the [VBRV Training page](#) of our website for updates.

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Figure 1 'TILE'

## Task – Individual – Load – Environment



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**Table 1**

Principle	What does it look like	Why is it important
Dynamic stable base	Feet spread apart, one foot slightly forward, ready to move	Gives you the ability to adjust quickly to any changes, keeps your back's three natural curves
Soft hips and knees	Think of a puppet rather than a tin soldier, joints are not rigid or locked out	Gives you the ability to adjust quickly to any changes, keeps your back's three natural curves
Keep load close	Hugging the load, gripping with whole hand not just fingers	Gives you more stability & control, works with your centre of gravity
Keep joints in mid range	Your back has three curves. Knees are half bent (like a goalkeeper's stance) - not full crouch. Elbows close to sides not raised	Less pressure on ligaments, muscles & joints Maintains three natural curves Stronger
Don't twist - turn	Difference between turn and twist: turning involves moving your feet, twisting rotates the spine. Move your feet to the direction of travel	Twisting puts huge pressure on the spine. Keeping hips and shoulders in line makes you stronger, maintains three natural curves & provides more stability.
Transfer weight effectively	Use the power you have in your legs rather than your back	Gives you more stability & control, works with your centre of gravity

### Reporting an incident

You must report any accident, near miss or incident which occurs whilst performing or travelling to / from a roost visit to Natural England as soon as possible:

- Contact the Natural England 'near miss and incident reporting line' at any time on 0300 060 0100.
- If the incident results in injury to another person or damage to property please also contact: Martin Rhodes 0300 060 2676 or Lucy Foster 0300 060 0666.

### Feedback

If you have any feedback about this guidance or would like to see additions / amendments please get in touch by emailing:

[batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk)

### Further information

Please see our website page and other VBRV health and safety leaflets at:

[Health and safety for voluntary bat roost visitors](#)  
[Publications for voluntary bat roost visitors.](#)

For further information contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0300 060 0863 or e-mail [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk).

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