Theme of the Month (October 2023) – Hands Off, 5 Steps Back

MWHT are launching their ***Hands Off, 5 Steps Back*** campaign and Lifting Essentials booklet.

Hands off, 5 Steps back is intended to keep people safe during the initial stages of a lifting operation. By maximising the physical gap between personnel and the load being lifted, the risk of instinctive behaviours resulting in personnel interacting with the load when it is potentially not safe to do so, should be reduced.

The rule is that:

- Personnel must take their hands off the load and step back 5 paces until the load is freely suspended, steady, and stable.
- Slinger / Signallers will be allowed to sling the loads as normal, to direct the lifting equipment to take the slack out of the slings, but then the lifting equipment must be paused to allow everyone to take their hands off the load and step back 5 paces. Only when everyone is 5 paces back will the lifting equipment be allowed to start lifting up the load. This also means that where loads are being stood up, from horizontal to vertical, that everyone must be 5 paces back before the load starts to be picked up.
- Once the load is freely suspended and is steady and stable, then it is acceptable for personnel to approach the load for guiding and positioning where it is reasonable for them to do so.
- In defining this rule, we are not saying that 5 paces is necessarily sufficient to be away from any potential falling load – it may be necessary to stand much further back and this will be defined in the lift plan. The 5 paces is all about providing enough time for someone, who may have been instinctively rushing in to interact with a load, to be able to consciously stop themselves from moving any closer. Ultimately, damage to equipment and other structures is something we can move on from – injuries to people can be potentially life changing, or life ending.

What if achieving 5 paces is not reasonably practicable?

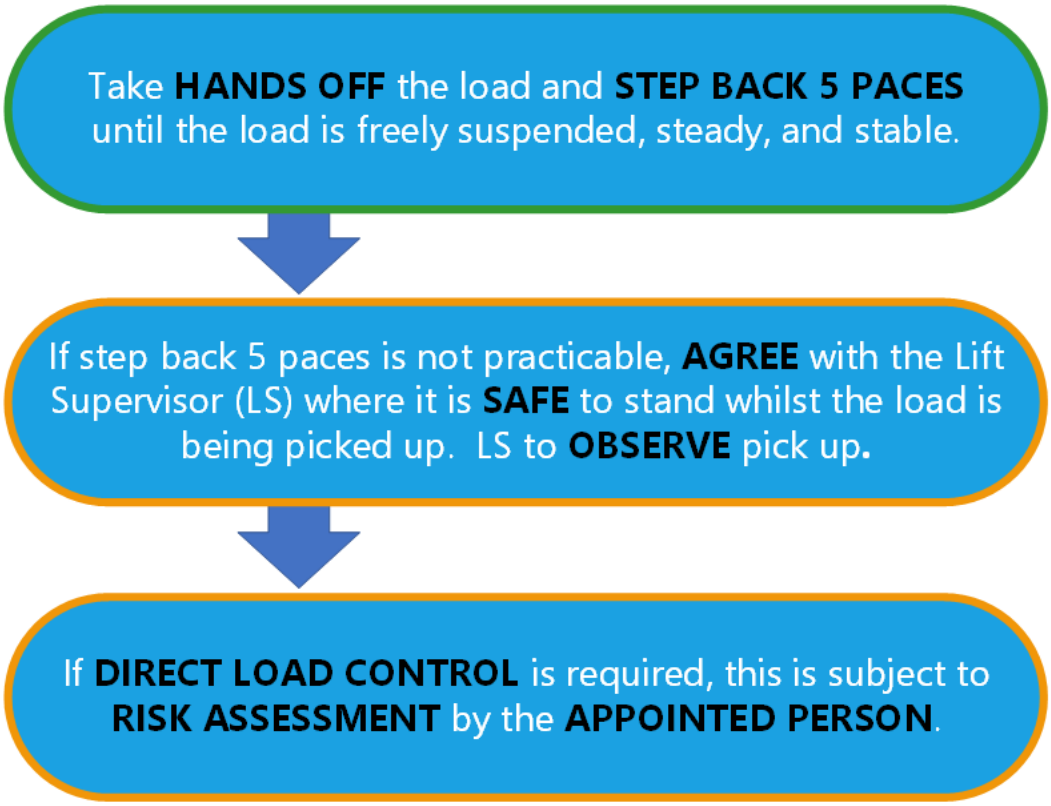
If achieving 5 paces is not reasonably practicable:

For example, due to physical constraints or the required method of working, then we expect the lift to be paused until the Slinger / Signaller and the Lift Supervisor are able to have a discussion and agree where it will be safe for the Slinger / Signaller to be positioned during the initial picking up of the load. In determining safe positioning, the Slinger / Signaller and Lift Supervisor must consider the locations of obstructions, crushing zones, slip, trip and fall hazards, and must also consider the route to safely retreat should the need arise.

The Lift Supervisor is then required to be present during the picking up of the load, to act as a reinforcer for the Slinger / Signaller in not instinctively moving towards the load should a problem arise.

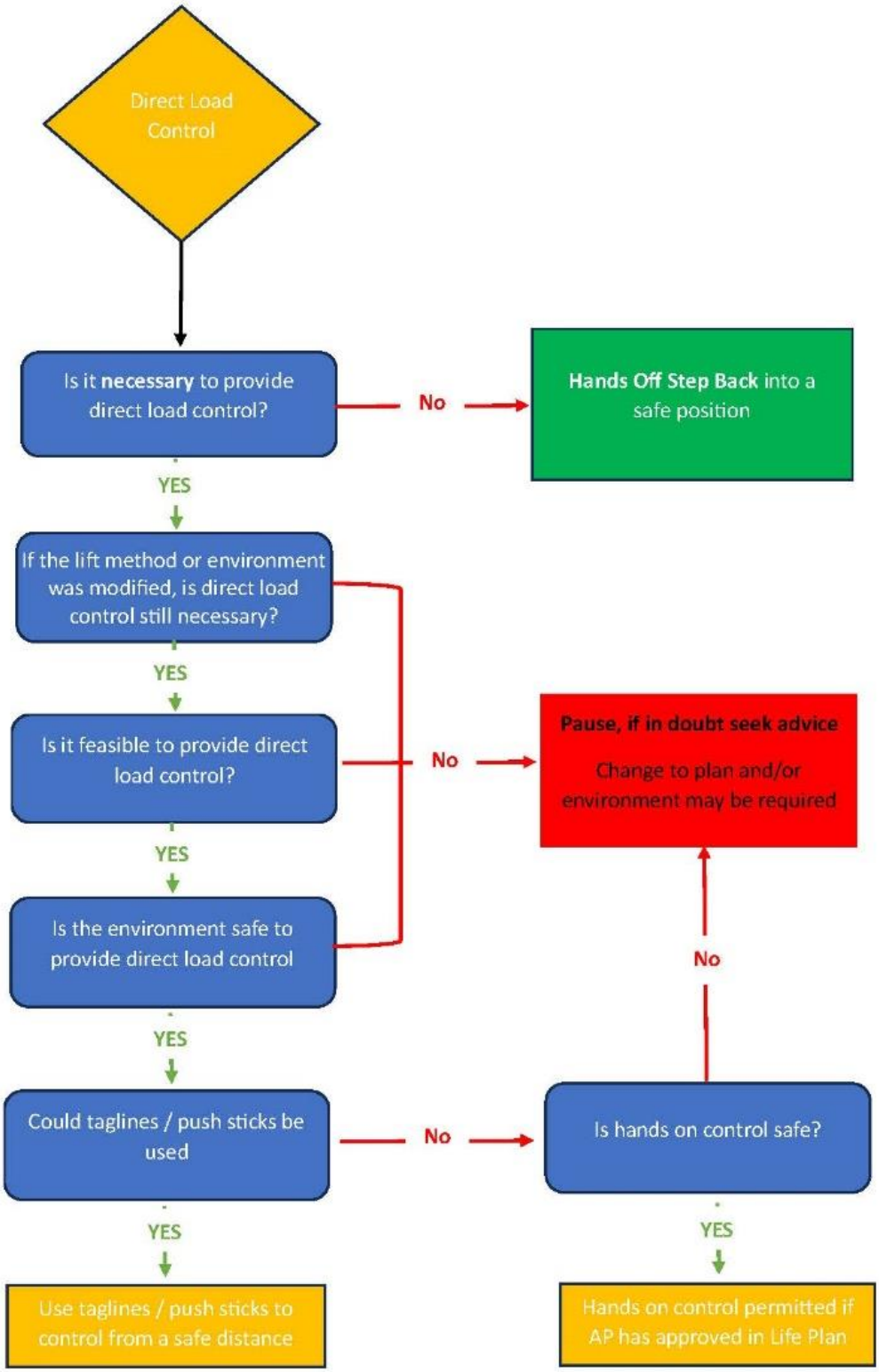
If Direct Contact is the only reasonably practicable solution:

We don't expect this to be a frequent occurrence. Where the Slinger / Signaller is required to have direct contact with the load for control (from within 5 paces) this must be detailed in the Lift Plan with appropriate, additional mitigating measures. *Note: this will either be by tag line or hands on control, though tag lines are preferable as it will provide a greater distance between the load and the Slinger / Signaller.*



Hands On Decision Tree

For further information on Direct Load Control use the Hands-on decision tree:



Tag Lines

Tag lines are most effective if their line of action forms a 90-degree angle (plan view) to an imaginary line from the Centre of Gravity to the attachment point.

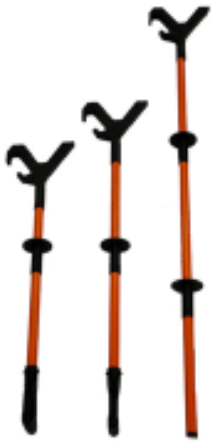
- Tag line handlers should aim to position themselves as close to that as safely practical (never underneath), consistent with being in sight of each other.
- It may be necessary for handlers to relocate to regain better "purchase" on the load.
- Plan a clear foot path for handlers and remove potential trip hazards before proceeding.
- Handlers must keep a minimum distance of 2 metres from any load at all times.
- Note: Loads may suddenly be subject to wind when clear of surroundings

Use of Tag Lines is to be detailed and recorded in the lift plan / RAMs and permit to lift.

Taglines are not to be used to:

- Pull a load out of its natural suspended line inducing inhaul or outhaul of the load lines.
- Hold a load against wind forces trying to push it out of line.
- Contribute to supporting the load.
- Attempting to pull a load out of plumb to align over holding bolts as an example.

Push Sticks



Handling the load with hands during lifting operations can be dangerous: use a push/pull pole allows manoeuvring the load keeping away from the line of fire as well as avoiding pinch points.

Always

- Inspect before and after use, to ensure it is free of defects and functions correctly
- Use it for the purpose for which it was designed
- Store it correctly, in a safe location and in the closed position, when not is use

Do Not Use

- To gain control over a swinging load
- To push or pull loads out of the vertical
- To control loads in adverse conditions
- Excessive force, as this may cause the pole to slip and unbalance the user
- In front of the body, as force may be transmitted from the load, through the pole, to the body
- As a lever or for any other purpose for which it was not designed

Use of push sticks is to be detailed and recorded in the lift plan / RAMs and permit to lift.

Manual Control (Hands on Load)

There may be rare instances when it is necessary for one or more persons to put hands on the load to, for instance, fine alignment of a vessel or column over its holding down bolts. **This is to be detailed and recorded in the lift plan / RAMs and permit to lift**.

- Never reach above shoulder height to access a load.
- Place hands on the surface and never in the or on the end of a load.
- Maintain an arm's length away from the load.
- Walk the load down, reaching down moves you closer to the load.
- Dynamic effects on the load (wind, pendulum actions & oscillating) will put you at risk.
- Never place any part of your body in between a load and another object (pinch point).
- Make sure that good communication is always maintained especially when hands are on the load.
- Keep toes, fingers etc well away from pinch points; lowering is only to be initiated on the command of the person in-charge on confirmation that all is clear.

Further Information:

For further information refer to The MWHT Way:

- **CD28 Control of Lifting Operations**

IF YOU SEE COLLEAGUES NOT FOLLOWING THIS GUIDANCE, PLEASE STOP THEM, EXPLAIN YOUR CONCERNS FOR THEIR SAFETY AND ASK THEM TO MODIFY THEIR BEHAVIOURS.