



Weekly Safety Meetings

Safety Training for the Construction Industry
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Select
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JULY 2015

Give Your Back a Break!

The nation's number one workplace safety problem is back injuries. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, every year, more than one million workers suffer back injuries. Nearly every activity we do involves some degree of lifting. Improper lifting can cause serious and permanent injuries. Although there is no method for totally eliminating back injuries in the workplace, you can prevent most of them by performing your daily lifting tasks safely and remembering a few simple and basic rules for lifting.

Before you lift, examine the load. Push the object lightly with your hands or feet to estimate its weight. Know your limits and ask a co-worker for help if you feel the object is too heavy for you to lift alone. You should also make sure the weight is balanced. Loose items inside a box can cause injuries if the box becomes unbalanced. Examine the object for sharp edges, grease, oil, and other hazards. Wear gloves to protect your hands and to help you grasp the load firmly.

Next, survey your route and make sure it's free of obstructions and tripping hazards. Avoid walking on uneven and slippery surfaces. Plan ahead and know where and how you are going to put down the load.

When you are ready to lift, stand close to the object with your feet spread about shoulder-width apart. With your back as straight as possible, bend your knees, squat down, and get a tight grip on the object before you begin to lift. Hold the load close to your body while you straighten your knees, using your leg muscles to push yourself up. Make sure you can see where you are going. Walk forward, turn slowly, and never twist your torso. Unload the item by squatting down once again, keeping your back straight.

Lifts done above shoulder height and below your knees are some of the most hazardous to your back. Don't over-reach. Use a ladder when you are lifting something over your head. When possible, try to avoid lifting by using a mechanical lifting aid such as a dolly or a forklift.

Back injuries heal slowly, if at all. A back injury may prevent you from working and enjoying life for a long time. It might seem natural to simply bend your back to lift a heavy object, but it is far better to make the effort to use proper lifting techniques than to risk injuring your back.

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SAFETY REMINDER
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Safety takes effort and thought.

Use your brain, avoid the pain.

NOTES:

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

S.A.F.E. CARDS* PLANNED FOR THIS WEEK:

REVIEWED MSDS #

SUBJECT:

MEETING DOCUMENTATION:

JOB NAME:

MEETING DATE:

SUPERVISOR:

ATTENDEES:

These instructions do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations.

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Lift Properly and Avoid Back Injuries

How many times have you heard somebody say “Oh, my aching back!”? More to the point, how many times have you said those same words? You can learn how to lift properly either before you get a back injury or after you get a back injury. Assuming that the injury is not too serious, you’ll definitely learn after an injury because lifting any other way just hurts too much. The right time to learn is before an injury—if you do, you may save yourself from a lot of agony. Today’s safety meeting is going to discuss how and why to lift properly.

Lifting and carrying require more than just brute force, good technique is important too. When you lift and carry the wrong way, you can injure your back. Back injuries are the most common type of injury in the workplace. They cause approximately 800,000 disabling injuries each year. That means that 91 people are disabled every hour of every day! More than half of all these injuries are the result of improper lifting. Make an effort to take care of your back whether you are lifting something at work or at home. You should know how much weight you can lift without getting hurt. Nobody wants you to hurt yourself by trying to lift more than you should. If you cannot manage the load yourself, ask another person to assist you or use a mechanical lifting device.

Before you lift anything, especially a heavy or bulky object, run through this list:

- Size up the load.
- Check for slivers, rough edges and protruding nails.
- Put rings, watches and jewelry in your pocket.
- Check your path for tripping hazards.
- Make sure the destination is ready and clear.
- Squat down close to the load with your feet apart.
- Keep your back straight and stomach pulled in.
- Get a firm, comfortable grip.
- Lift with your legs not with your back.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Avoid twisting or jerky motions.

Lifting properly isn’t hard, it’s just a little different than the way most of you are used to lifting. Because it’s different you will have to think and concentrate until the safe way becomes a habit. Remember, a strong, healthy, powerful back is vital to your job, your income and your livelihood—it also makes your life more comfortable and more enjoyable.

SAFETY REMINDER

Don’t leave safety for “the other guy” because as far as everyone else is concerned, you are the other guy!

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Stay Cool When It's Hot

It sure has gotten hot out here! With the onset of hot weather, we must make sure that exposure to heat doesn't compromise our health and safety. Anyone can become vulnerable to the stresses of severe summer heat, but because so much construction work takes place outside, we're more vulnerable than most. We need to keep a cool head about hot weather safety.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that from 1979 to 1999, excessive heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths in the United States. That means that during this 20-year period, more people died from extreme heat than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. Weather conditions are out of our control, but we can take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses and deaths during these hot summer months. All we need to do is learn to protect ourselves and learn to recognize the signs of heat illness.

Reduce your risk of suffering heat-related illnesses by protecting your body on the inside and the outside:

- **Wear** lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- **Prevent** sunburn by applying sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF).
- **Eat** regular, well-balanced meals and avoid heavy foods in the heat of the day.

- **Drink** plenty of fluids to keep your body hydrated; water and electrolyte replacement drinks are best.
- **Avoid** caffeinated drinks and alcohol.

The most severe heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If you or your co-workers don't take action to treat heat exhaustion, the illness could progress to heat stroke and possibly death. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, and pale, clammy skin. If your co-worker shows these symptoms, move the victim to a cool, shaded area. Loosen and remove clothing. Try to cool the person by fanning, spraying the skin with a mist of water, or wiping the skin with a wet cloth. If the person doesn't feel better, call 9-1-1. Symptoms of heat stroke include hot, dry skin, changes in skin color, strange behavior, seizures or fits, and loss of consciousness. Call 9-1-1 immediately if a co-worker has any of these symptoms. While help is on the way, move the person to a cool, shaded area, then cool the victim's body by placing ice packs under the armpits and in the groin.

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SAFETY REMINDER
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Try to do the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day, and remember to take frequent breaks.

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Hot Weather Safety

Summer is here again; you will be exposed to hot and humid conditions. Hot weather and high humidity can spell disaster. When humidity is high and the body is unable to cool itself sufficiently through sweating, serious heat stress may occur. Because your job is physically demanding, exposure to these conditions elevates your risk for heat stress. This illness can affect your alertness and physical strength, and can cause fatigue and reduced mental capacity. More serious cases can lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

To protect yourself from heat illness, remember the following:

- Perform the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day—usually the early morning.
- Take time to slowly adjust your body to the heat to build up a tolerance for it.
- Keep your body hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids such as cool water and sports drinks with electrolytes.
- Avoid drinking coffee, tea, and carbonated drinks. They actually increase dehydration.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, cotton clothing.
- Take frequent breaks in cool shaded areas.
- Avoid eating large amounts of food or heavy meals before working in hot environments.

Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses:

- Signs of *heat cramps* include spasms and cramps in your muscles due to excessive loss of salts through sweating. If this occurs, you should stop, take a break, and replace your body's electrolytes with a drink like Gatorade®.
- Symptoms of *heat exhaustion* include headaches, dizziness, light-headedness, weakness, dry mouth, nausea, rapid breathing, and pale clammy skin. If you experience these symptoms, immediately move to a cool, shaded area to rest. Loosen or remove clothing, and drink some water. If you don't feel better in a few minutes, call 911.
- When *heat stroke* occurs, your body is no longer capable of cooling itself. This is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms include pale or red skin, lack of sweating, confusion, irritability, seizures, and loss of consciousness. Call for emergency medical help immediately. Move the victim to a cool shaded area. Remove any heavy outer clothing and try to keep the person cool.

Never ignore the symptoms of heat-related illness. Tell someone immediately, stop what you're doing, and cool off.

SAFETY REMINDER

Even getting a good tan may increase your risk of skin cancer.

Protect your skin from the sun with clothing or sun block.

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