

Tool Box Talk

SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES

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Back, neck and shoulder injuries are some of the most commonly occurring injuries in the construction industry. More than half of these back related injuries are caused by bodily reaction and exertion which includes improper lifting. As construction involves a great deal of manual lifting, it is important to know the steps and techniques involved in proper lifting to reduce your chances of an injury. Always stop and think before bending to pick up an object, and over time, safe lifting techniques should become a habit.



Safe Lifting & Carrying Tips to Help Prevent Back Injuries

Before Lifting:

- Size up the load and get help if needed - Do not attempt to lift the load if it appears to be too heavy or awkward.
- Use a dolly, forklift or other material handling equipment whenever possible.
- For a two-person lift, both people should be roughly the same height and agree upon who will take charge, the type of lift and how they will lower the load.
- Make sure the weight of the load is balanced and packed so it will not move around during transportation.
- Ensure there is plenty of room to move, your path is clear of any hazards, and avoid walking on slippery, uneven surfaces - Good housekeeping ensures you won't trip or stumble over an obstacle.

While Lifting, Carrying & Lowering:

- Get as close to the load as possible - Lifting capacity is reduced the further away you are from the load.
- Put yourself in the best possible position for the lift, avoiding reaching, bending or twisting.
- Use a well balanced stance, feet shoulder-width apart and one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Bend at the knees and grip the object with the palms of your hands and fingers - The palm grip is much more secure.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as you begin to lift.
- Keep your lower back in its normal curved position and you use your legs to lift - The muscles in your legs are much stronger than your back muscles.
- To change direction, shift your foot position and turn your whole body - Pick up your feet and pivot ensuring you do not twist your back.
- Lower the load using your legs and maintaining the curve in your lower back - You can injure your back just as easily lowering the load as you can lifting it.



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