

Tool Box Talk

BACK SAFETY

December 2011

STRETCHING FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Before beginning any stretching program, check with your healthcare provider. If you question any of the following stretches, or feel any discomfort while doing any of these stretches, stop doing the stretch(es) immediately and check with your healthcare provider before continuing.

Many parts of your job are physically demanding and may lead to discomfort. Done consistently, these stretches can compensate for awkward positions (such as working overhead or bend over), maintain or increase flexibility, and improve circulation.

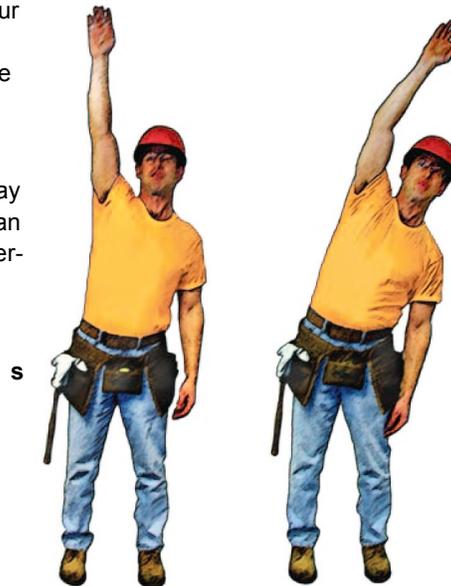
Stretch before and during your workday. Stretch **-l-o-w-l-y** and gently, don't bounce and don't hold your breath. Hold each stretch 3-5 seconds. And don't forget to do both right and left sides.

In the Saskatchewan construction industry, an average of 890 workers per year receive an injury due to bodily reaction and exertion and cost the industry an average of 5.1 million dollars per year.



Chest and Shoulder Stretch

- Standing up straight, raise your arms with your elbows bent so your upper arms are parallel to the floor, fingers pointing up.
- **S-l-o-w-l-y** squeeze your shoulder blades together and hold for 3-5 seconds.



Side bend

- Feet shoulder width apart, arms at side.
- With one hand, reach up overhead and **s-l-o-w-l-y** lean towards opposite side. Keep both feet flat on ground.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Return to starting position and repeat twice on each side.



Quadriceps Stretch

- Holding on for balance with your left hand, grab your right foot or ankle with your right hand.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds and feel the pull in the front of your thigh.
- Repeat on opposite side.
- Do each leg twice.



Hamstring Stretch

- Raise your foot on an elevated surface, at least 10" to 12" high. A truck's running board works, as well as a bucket.
- Looking forward, **s-l-o-w-l-y** bend at the hip keeping raised leg straight.
- Stop when you feel tension and hold 3-5 seconds.
- To increase tension, pull toes toward face.
- Switch legs and repeat stretch. Do each leg twice.

Illustrations courtesy of State Compensation Insurance Fund.

A well designed pre-job stretching program can help reduce both the number and costs associated with these injuries.



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