



Loss Prevention Topics



Ergonomic Solutions - Safe Lifting

Ergonomic Solutions - Back Injury Prevention through Safe Lifting Procedures

Background:

Over one million workers suffer back injuries each year. Twenty-five percent of all workers' compensation indemnity claims are related to back injuries. Back injuries are painful and affect all aspects of life. The chance of re-injury after a back injury is significant.

The following procedures can help reduce the potential for Back Injuries:

Plan ahead; assess the lift and your surroundings. Knowing what you're doing and where you're going will prevent you from making awkward movements while holding something heavy.

- Is the load of a size and weight that you can adequately handle?
- Is the path of travel for the lift clear of obstructions?
- Can the load be broken down into smaller components?
- Will the load interfere with your vision?
- Can the load be lifted safer with the help of a co-worker? If you are lifting with another person make sure you both agree on the plan.
- Can the load be lifted safer with a mechanical device?

When lifting always remember the following:

- Get as close as possible to the load. You will be a stronger and more stable lifter if the object is held close to your body rather than at the end of your reach. Make sure you have a firm hold on the object you are lifting, and keep it balanced close to your body.
- Center yourself over the load with your feet shoulder width apart. A solid base of support is important while lifting. Holding your feet too close together will be unstable, too far apart will hinder movement. Keep your feet about shoulder width apart and take short steps.



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- Tighten your stomach muscles; this helps to support the back.
- Squat down, bend your knees and keep your back in its normal arch. Let your legs do the lifting.
- Get a good tight hold on the load and keep it close to your body.
- Move with a smooth motion, lifting straight up.
- Keep load in front of torso. Do not twist the back. Your nose and feet should always be pointed in your direction of travel. Carry the load between your shoulders and your waist.
- If you become tired while carrying the load, stop, set the load down and rest. When setting down the load, squat down bending your knees, keeping the load close to you. Release the load when the desired position is achieved.
- When using mechanical devices remember to push the load rather than pull the load. Keep an arm length from the load with your arms in the locked position and your back in its normal arch. Use your body weight and legs to push the load.
- When storing objects on shelves put heavier objects on the shelves located at waist level. Put lighter objects on the upper or lower shelves.
- Good nutrition and exercise can also contribute to back injury prevention. The mattress that you sleep on is also important in maintaining good posture.
- Following these guidelines should help to reduce the potential of becoming one of the many people presently suffering from back injuries caused by unsafe lifting techniques.

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