



Contractor Safety – Safe Lifting

Lifting is one of the most common tasks performed by workers in a wide variety of jobs. However, because lifting is so common and because it can put a serious strain on the human body, it is a source of numerous work-related injuries. This can range from a simple back strain to a serious back injury requiring surgery and resulting in long-term disability.

Safe lifting education is the best tool to keep employees from getting hurt. Employers and employees who understand how to properly lift and who can recognize lifting risks are less likely to suffer from serious back injuries.

Lifting Factors that Increase the Risk of Back Injury

Educate employees to recognize the following factors that can increase the risk of a lifting-related back injury:

- Lifting a load that is too heavy or too wide for a person's capability
- Lifting objects many times within a short period of time
- Lifting and twisting at the same time
- Lifting objects directly off the ground instead of from a raised surface
- Lifting something up to an extended height
- Lifting objects that require a person to stretch out and extend their body
- Lifting for too many hours during the work day

Nine Steps to Safe Lifting

Educate employees on the following safe lifting techniques.

1. **Size up the load** – Assess the object you are going to be lifting and determine if it is stable, balanced and whether it is heavy or light in weight
2. **Plan the job** – Figure out how you plan to lift the object, where it is going and whether the route is free of tripping or slipping hazards
3. **Establish a base of support** – Wear non-slip shoes or boots and get a firm footing. Feet should be at least shoulder width apart with a staggered stance of one foot slightly behind another
4. **Bend your knees** – Never stoop and bend over
5. **Keep your back straight** – Tuck your chin into your chest to keep your back straight
6. **Get a good grip** – Place your hands on opposite sides of the object and grip it with your whole hand, not just fingers
7. **Keep the load close to your body** – By keeping the object close, you exert less force on your back
8. **Lift with your legs** – Your leg muscles are large and powerful and should do the work. Flex your knees and hips, not your back
9. **Pivot, don't twist** – Never twist your body when carrying objects. Instead, pivot your feet or turn your entire body in the direction you need to go

Additional Steps to Help Avoid Lifting-Related Back Injuries

Educate employees to recognize the following factors that can increase the risk of a lifting-related back injury:

- Keep in good physical condition
- Ask your doctor for some back-strengthening exercises
- Never lift first thing in the morning – always be “warmed up”
- Use a dolly, hand truck, pallet truck or forklift when feasible
- When possible, reduce the amount of a single load/object
- **Enforce Safe Lifting Techniques on the Jobsite**



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