



PREVENTION

Before starting or engaging in operations that will involve lifting or moving materials all employees will:

- A. Analyze the task and determine where high risk back stress will occur.
- B. Determine the proper mechanical equipment required to lift or move heavy objects and use it to assist in completion of the task.
- C. Always use proper equipment to assist in lifting or moving any load over forty (40) percent of your body weight.

The purpose of this section is to show that every lifting experience can be made safe if this **Back Injury Prevention Program** is followed.

In this section the topics covered are: **PLAN AHEAD** and **RULES**

PLAN AHEAD

- * Know your limits.
- * Know your course.
- * Know your load.
- * Reach and lift properly.
- * Condition your muscles.
- * *Unlift* properly.

RULES

- * Get a firm footing and grasp.
- * Keep it close.
- * Avoid twisting or turning your body; pivot while lifting.
- * Lift with your legs.
- * Lift smoothly, don't jerk.
- * Keep your upper body straight or upright.

PLAN AHEAD FOR A SAFE LIFT

INJURIES ARE EASY TO AVOID when you work safety.

1. KNOW YOUR LIMITS.
2. KNOW YOUR COURSE. **CHECK OUT THE PATH... look** for obstacles under and over, spills, proper lighting and changes in elevation. Choose (or make) a clear pathway over the flattest surface, even if it takes a little extra time. You are more valuable to us healthy.
3. KNOW YOUR LOAD.
4. LIFT PROPERLY.
5. CONDITION YOUR MUSCLES. **CHECK OUT YOUR BODY BEFORE YOU START.** Have you stretched your muscles? Are you physically and mentally ready to begin work?
6. **UNLIFT** PROPERLY.

THE RULES OF SAFE LIFTING

Lifting injuries continue to occur all too often! Injuries from lifting affect the back, legs, arms, shoulders and neck. Please review the following lifting techniques, practice them and discuss them with your coworkers. The following lifting techniques should significantly reduce the probability of an injury and will reduce the likelihood of pain from lifting. You must recognize, however, that lifting even correctly, is work and depends on your physical conditioning. Let's really learn these techniques – they will help you stay healthy and safe.

HOW TO LIFT PROPERLY

1. **GET A FIRM FOOTING.** Keep your feet slightly apart for a stable base and point your toes slightly outward.
2. **KEEP THE LOAD CLOSE TO YOUR BODY.** The closer the load is to your spine, the less force it exerts on back muscles which in turn helps you handle the load more efficiently.
3. **DON'T TWIST OR TURN.** While carrying a load, avoid twisting your torso. This puts extreme pressure on the base of your spine. Instead, turn your entire body, starting with your feet.
4. **BEND YOUR KNEES.** Don't bend at the waist. Keep the principles of leverage in mind at all times. Don't overstress yourself.
5. **TIGHTEN YOUR STOMACH MUSCLES.** Abdominal muscles support your spine when you are lifting. This offsets the force of the load. Train yourself to gently tighten these muscles just prior to lifting and *un*lifting.
6. **LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS.** This can be rather confusing; however, if you are lifting properly, you will feel the pressure in your upper thighs. Let these large muscles do the work of lifting rather than the smaller, weaker muscles of your back.
7. **KEEP YOUR BACK STRAIGHT OR UPRIGHT.** In other words, don't add the weight of your body to the weight of the load.
8. **ABOVE ALL-ASSUME A POSITION OF COMFORT.** Perform your tasks in a manner that is comfortable for you.

STEPS OF SAFE LIFTING

ANALYZE THE TASK... to handle materials safely, lift everything twice. First, lift the load in your mind. Plan every step before you actually carry out the physical activity. Although you may do the same job many times over, it is always a good idea to carry out the "Mental Lift" before each load is lifted and moved. Do not place yourself at risk!! Think about your procedures and above all, **DO NOT PRACTICE YOUR MISTAKES.**

VISUALIZE THE LIFT... as you are visually inspecting the load, test the size by placing your arms around the object. If it is too large to carry close to your body, or the load is shaped in such a way that prevents you from adequately seeing your path, get assistance. Don't be shy about asking a coworker for assistance. The extra time could save you days of pain.

COMMUNICATE AND COORDINATE... if no one is available to help you move a load, it might be best to wait until help is available. If it is important to finish the task and nobody is available to help, consider a better or safer techniques. Can the load be broken down into smaller, more easily handled packages? If so, do it. Maybe you need mechanical help, and it would be best to utilize a hand cart or other mechanical device.

PUSH – DON'T PULL... whenever possible, push rather than pull a load. It is safer to use your leg and stomach muscles instead of your back muscles.

UNLIFT PROPERLY... apply the same proper lifting techniques when putting down a heavy load. Bend at the knees, using leg muscles, keep the load as close to your spine as possible. Don't drop the load at your feet as that may put too much pressure on your spine.

REVIEW and SUMMARY

Now that we have reviewed proper techniques for lifting, and discussed why our backs sometimes give us discomfort, let's do a little additional review to bring everything together to help eliminate back injuries and muscle fatigue.

AVOID WORKING FOR LONG PERIODS IN A BENT OVER POSITION.

Get up close to your load or your work area. Do not over reach to grasp or lift. Avoid lifting above your waist, but if you must, reposition your hand grip. Don't arch your back while lifting because this makes nerve roots susceptible to pinching that causes pain.

WATCH OUT FOR RINGS AND WATCHBANDS.

Rings and watchbands can catch on projections. If this does occur, you are more likely to lose your grip on a load and in the process of attempting to save the load, you may injure yourself. Consider that weak boxes with loose materials can shift, throwing your off balance; you should suspect them as hidden safety hazards.

LIFTING PROPERLY IS PART OF YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION.

Knowing how to lift safely is your responsibility. Be cautious. Know where you are going by planning a direct, obstacle-free path; this is another component of proper lifting. As we have discussed previously, unloading or unlifting safely is as important as lifting properly.

IF YOU CAN'T SEE AROUND YOUR LOAD, IT IS TOO BIG TO CARRY ALONE.

Get assistance. Be especially careful on ramps and stairs when carrying a load. Your hands and arms can bump or scrap rough surfaces that can cause you to drop your load dropping your load can result in injury to your feet and hands in addition to a back injury.

TEAM LIFTING!!

Don't try to do the job alone if you have any doubts about its safety! Work carefully, and consider others as you work. Don't leave objects where other people could slip, trip, or fall over them. Remember, too, that other employees may not be as strong as you are, so be considerate; put heavy items out of the way of other.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY.

Pain can be a signal telling you something. That something maybe that your procedure is not appropriate or the pain may be normal muscle fatigue. In either case, talk with your supervisor. Remember, we don't want to practice our mistakes. Sometimes a short rest and some stretching will reduce muscle fatigue and prevent an injury.

PROPER LIFTING IS CARING ABOUT YOURSELF... AND OTHERS!

Congratulations to those of you who have consistently practiced safe, proper lifting techniques. We encourage you all to feel totally confident that you could recite and practice these safe procedures without referring to the lesson plan. Practice makes perfect!