

## **LIFTING & MATERIAL HANDLING SAFETY (ALL OFFICES)**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Staff will learn how back injuries occur
- Staff will learn safe lifting and materials handling techniques
- Staff will learn back injury prevention practices

Back injuries are a major cause of work-related disability and the second most common cause of lost workdays. According to the National Safety Council, 400,000 workers suffer new back injuries each year. One out of five workers experiencing a disabling injury suffers from a back injury. Generally, these injuries are the result of improper lifting methods. These injuries occur everywhere, not just to maintenance staff.

Preventing back injuries and back pain begins with a good safety attitude and thinking about personal safety before performing a lift. Safe lifting techniques, team lifting, and utilization of lifting devices are all effective methods that keep your back healthy and free from injury.

We all lift objects on a daily basis, sometimes-light incidental objects and sometimes-heavy cumbersome loads. Regardless of what we lift or how often we lift, we can injure our back at anytime with any size load. The golden rule is to never lift a load improperly, and if necessary, use a lifting device, or team approach.

### **COMMON CAUSES OF LIFTING INJURIES**

- Lifting a heavy or cumbersome load by yourself.
- Employing improper lifting technique puts too much strain on your back.
- Holding a load away from the body when lifting. The closer a load is to our body, the less strain is placed on our back.
- Bending from the waist rather than lifting with our legs.
- Twisting and turning while lifting.
- Carrying a load down stairs or on a slope.

Many back problems are caused by a gradual degeneration of the discs rather than one traumatic injury event. This is important to remember because when you first lift incorrectly, you will not generally feel pain for sometime; however, the damage is done.

## **PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUE**

*(Demonstrate the proper lifting technique and/or have an attendee demonstrate.)*

- Plan the Lift
  - Before lifting, determine if you can lift the object safely. If not, use a team approach or lifting device.
  - Make sure that passageways and doorways are wide enough to make it through without damaging the load or injuring your fingers.
  - Remove any sharp protruding objects from the load and use gloves when necessary.
- Executing the Lift
  - Place your feet about shoulder width, bend knees, and center your body weight over your feet.
  - Get as close to the load as possible.
  - Rise slowly and allow your legs to do the lifting; lift with your legs, not your back.
- Traveling With the Load
  - Make sure path is clear of any hazards or obstructions.
  - Keep load close to your body and make sure you can see over the load.
  - Face the direction of travel and avoid twisting or bending.
- Setting Down the Load
  - Reverse the steps used for lifting.
- Other Safe Lifting Techniques
  - If an object is above your shoulders, use a step stool or ladder to reach it. Get as close to the load as possible slide it towards you and let your arms and legs do the work, not your back.
  - Loads under racks and cabinets; pull the load toward you, then support it on one knee before you lift and use your legs to power the lift.
  - Loads should not be carried up or down stairs. Use an elevator, if available, or a lifting device. (NEVER HAND CARRY LOADS ON STAIRS.)

**TEAM APPROACH:** Never try to lift a heavy or cumbersome load by yourself. If the load is heavy (45 pounds or more) or cumbersome, use a team approach and get help. There's nothing wrong with asking for help. The time you might save is insignificant compared to the injury and pain and suffering potential.

**LIFTING DEVICES:** Regardless of the size or weight of a load, it is always a good practice to use a lifting device, e.g., cart, dolly, or hand truck. By using a lifting device, you eliminate any chance of injuring your back from lifting.

## **POLICY**

*Discuss all organizational policies related to lifting and materials handling.*

## **CLOSING**

- *Encourage discussion about this presentation and proper lifting and materials handling techniques.*