

Toolbox Talk - Safe Lifting

Toolbox Talks are intended to supplement training as safety and health discussions on the job site.

Employer Flexible Safety Library

Introduction

In order to lift safely you must lift properly. What does this mean? Bend your knees not your back and don't twist as you lift sometimes go against human nature. Think about lifting and use these tips to help you lift properly.

Discussion Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Employee Participants:

Tips to help avoid back injuries

- ☐ Get as close to the load as possible. The closer you are to the load the more it reduces strain on the back. Squat to lift the load and pull it between your legs. This is one way to avoid bending at the waist. Just be aware that continual lifting in this manner can cause fatigue and reduce your ability to lift for any length of time because you are lifting your entire body in addition to the load. Consider other strategies for repeated lifting.
- ☐ Avoid picking up heavy objects placed below your knees. Heavy objects should be placed below shoulder level and above knee level. Do not chance lifting a load if you suspect it is too heavy to be lifted comfortably. Use mechanical aids, break the load down or get help. The most common cause of back injury is overloading.
- ☐ Keep your back straight. Don't bend at the waist when reaching to lift an object. Keep the natural arch in your lower back, which distributes the load evenly over the surface of spinal disks. Bending principally from the hips is acceptable if you maintain the arch in your back, rather than bending at the waist.
- ☐ Glue your hand to your thigh. If you carry a load in one hand, such as when carrying a tool box, place your free hand on the outside of your thigh and mentally "glue" it into position. This will help you maintain correct back alignment and avoid leaning which can but strain as much strain on the spine as lifting.
- ☐ Tighten your stomach muscles. This will help prevent the spine from twisting. Turn by moving your feet not your waist. If you wear a back support belt, wear it low on your trunk and loosen it when you are not lifting.
- ☐ Consider staying in good physical condition. A protruding stomach is an extra load carried away from the center line of the body and it prevents you from keeping a lifted load close.
- ☐ Stretch and loosen up before work. Trunk flexibility and mobility is significantly lower in the morning than later in the day which can increase the number and severity of back strains at this time. A few minutes of stretching can warm up cold stiff muscles and tendons to help avoid an injury. Professional athletes warm up to avoid injuries, so should you!

The material in this document is provided for informational purposes only and not as a comprehensive or exhaustive resource on this topic. The toolbox should not be used as substitution for training but as a supplement to formal training.