

Toolbox Talk # 1.02 – Back Injuries

Whether you're suffering from a pulled muscle, sprain, charley horse, or backache, chances are you could have prevented it. More than 250,000 workers injure their muscles by using improper lifting methods each year. It happens when climbing in and out of trucks and lifting objects. Your back is one part of the body that can never return to its former delicate structure after an injury, because repairs are rarely 100 percent effective, precautions should always be taken to prevent injuries and accidents, especially those that affect your back.

The most common source of muscle ache and pain is poor lifting methods. One work injury out of four results from incorrect handling procedures or from using the wrong materials. When you straighten up after bending over, muscles, vertebrae, ligaments, and discs in your back bear more than a quarter of a ton of strain. If you lift with your back at the same time, the weight of the object is multiplied 15 times. Translated into lost time from work, such aches and pains cost nearly \$70 million a year, most of which is spent on pain killers in a futile attempt to relieve the aching back.

Because we bring most muscle aches and pains on ourselves, the best medicine is a dose of prevention. Oil spills, clogged aisles, tools lying on the floor, and the act of climbing in and out of a cab can produce falls, which often result in back injuries. But since the bulk of back injuries results from poor lifting techniques, these techniques and suggestions may help prevent such injuries:

- Face the load you are trying to lift.
- Determine the center of gravity in order to keep the load balanced.
- Bend at the knees with your feet about 20 inches apart (approximately shoulder's width), one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Grasp the load and gain control before you attempt the lift.
- Watch out for nails or other protrusions that could cause cuts or other types of injuries.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Lift gradually with your legs, not your back; don't jerk the load.
- Make sure the path you're taking is free of obstructions or slipping hazards.
- Know your lifting ability and get help with heavy or awkward loads.
- When you set the load down, watch for pinch points.
- To put the load down, just reverse the steps, lowering with your legs, placing your feet in the proper position and keeping the load close to your body.

These reminders may help you on the job:

- Gear your activity to your age and physical condition. Physical exertion is an excellent body builder, but it should not be performed in excess. Stop and rest when you feel tired.
- When entering or leaving a truck cab, use the handgrips and make sure the step-ups are dry and clear.
- If you have a job that allows little movement, it is important to watch your posture and change your working position as often as you can.
- Don't become tense – rest the muscles that are constantly in use.
- Take time each day to remind yourself of what you are doing.

In short, use your head to save your back.

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Project: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Company: _____

Other safety issues covered or comments from crew members:

Attendees:

Name: (please print)	Signature:	Company:
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