

TOOL BOX TALKS

Safe Lifting: Protect Your Back

It is said that the spine is the most commonly injured structure in the body. Safe lifting practices are crucial for everyone – no matter what industry you work in. Over time, repeated injury to the spine causes degeneration – which is the painful aging of spinal bones, discs, tendons and cartilage. Do not take your spine health for granted, as aging will prove to be painful. The following safety tips work not only for the construction industry, but for all industries. Take care of your back.

WORKSAFE TIPS

FIRST THINGS FIRST

- Does the object need to be lifted in the first place?
- Can a tool be used?
 - Cart
 - Dolly
 - Forklift
 - Hand truck
 - Wheelbarrow
- Does the entire load need to be lifted?
- Can the load be broken into smaller quantities?
- Is the entire load really needed?
- Can I get help from co-workers?

PRE PLANNING THE LIFT

- Verify the walking path is clear of trip hazards, obstacles and holes.
- Plan the route – take the shortest route possible.
- Create a place to set the load down.
- Can the load be team-lifted with help from co-workers?

SURVEY THE LOAD

- Are there handles?
- What is the weight? Is there a ticket or bill of lading that states the weight?
- Can the load be broken down?
- Does the lift require awkward postures?

LIKE A WEIGHTLIFTER

- Stand as close to the load as possible.
- Spread the feet to maintain good balance.
- Test the load – if it is too heavy, don't lift it!!!
- Squat and maintain the curve in the spine.
- Grasp the load by handles or good handholds.
- Lift SLOWLY with the legs – not the spine.
- Keep your head up, chin out.

WHILE CARRYING THE LOAD

- Make sure that you can see around the load.
- Avoid twisting the body – places enormous weight on the lower spine.
- Change direction with your feet, and do not twist.
- Take a break if you get tired.
- Find a table or sawhorse to support the load if a new grip needs to be found.

STAIRS

- Use handrails if possible.
- Verify the stairs are clear of trip hazards.
- Verify the stairs will handle the load weight and the weight of your body!
- Face the stairs and not outward.

LOWERING THE LOAD

- Slowly lower the load.
- Do not drop the load.
- Face the location where you want to place the load.
 - Do not twist.
 - Bend at the knees, not at the back.
 - Keep the load close to the body.
 - Squat to set the load down.
 - Stand up slowly.

Missouri Employers Mutual

Work SAFE



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